IMAGINING NEW ZEALAND: LITERARY CRITIQUE AND CULTURAL REDEFINITION 1940-1983

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La critique est aisee, et l'art est difficle[1]

[1]Fr. "Criticizing is easy, but art is difficult"

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Abstract

This thesis is a cultural history with a strong literary focus. Its central argument is that the eleven New Zealand essays examined herein demand to be recognised as a distinct mode of writing of local significance. New Zealand literary critique has a genealogy that moves back through the writing of Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, towards the development of the essay form in renaissance times and the birth of the poet-critic in antiquity. The mode developed in New Zealand during World War Two as a means of both appraising the (nascent) state of New Zealand literature and criticising the culture whence it sprang. In line with its genealogy, the mode has a strong romantic orientation – an aspect that has provided a topic of enduring interest for writers across the late twentieth century. The central conclusion of the thesis is that the authors of New Zealand literary critique have presented the country with a body of literary-cultural essays that comment upon their nation in not only literary and cultural, but also philosophical terms. The ongoing problem of romanticism is identified and argued to be a central issue in attempts to formulate a local aesthetic. I suggest that the circumstances of settlement during the Victorian era have presented theorists with an over-riding issue that can only be resolved through attention to global attempts to deal with the self-same problem. The global mirror reflects New Zealand's own local problematic.

> There is a certain type of essay that gives the impression of bursting at the seams because it wants to argue with our whole culture, our whole set of artistic habits and values . . .[1]

[1]Roger Horrocks, 'An Essay About Experimental Films That Ended Up As An Essay About New Zealand', Parallax 1:1 (Spring 1982), p.87.

Preamble

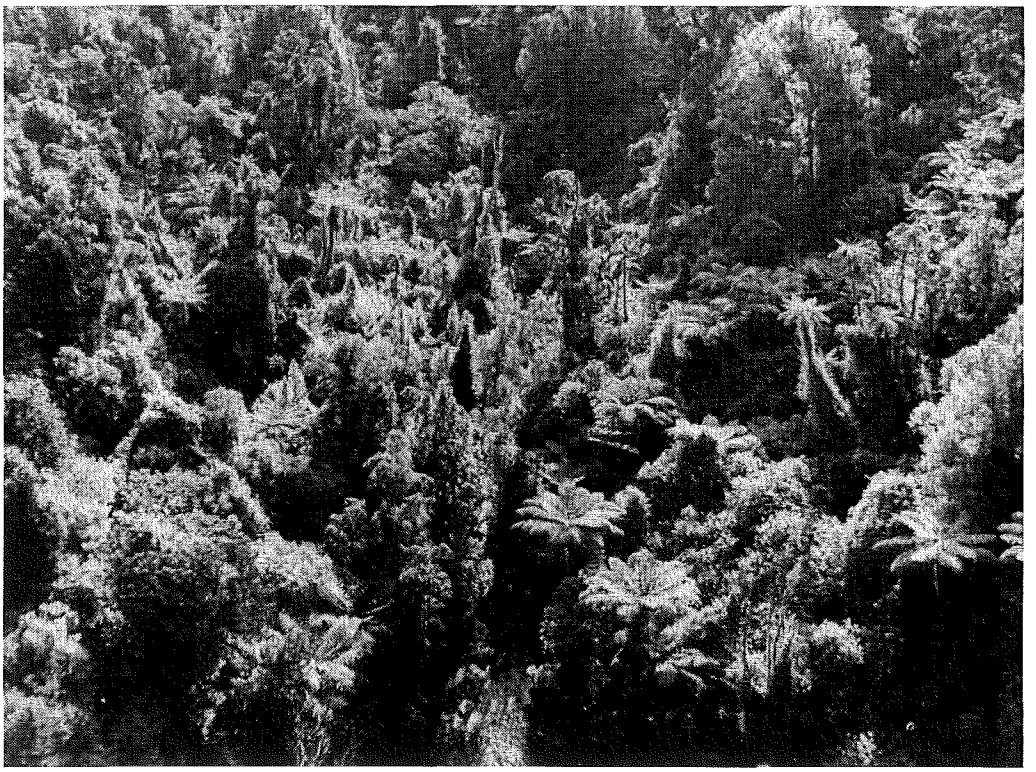

Figure 1

"Primaeval New Zealand"

> This, then, is the basic fact of our history - an age of silence. While the countries of Europe and Asia felt the movement of tribes and the growth of nations; while the classic civilizations were tumultuously taking their shape in the Mediterranean basin; while barbaric empires developed, with splendous [sic] of mythology and ritual, in the broad lands of South America; while the dream of spirit in nature was creating the colourful but passive culture of India: the islands of New Zealand were outside the mind of the world, intact and pure amid the flow of winds which brought only the sound and the distilled moisture of the sea.[2]

[2]M. H. Holcroft, 'The Memory of a Voyage', in M. H. Holcroft, The Waiting Hills (Wellington: The Progressive Publishing Society, 1943), p.59.

From the perspective of an artist, New Zealand during the second half of the twentieth century could be an unforgiving place in which to live and work. Faced with a mode of secular puritanism that demanded conformity and adherence to a passionless life, many New Zealand artists experienced ostracism and even ridicule as they tried to search themselves for a meaning that their fellows could share. Such people often attempted to transcend their society with dreams of the untouched environment that existed before the European invasion of the nineteenth century, etiolating their art and forcing themselves into a life of sublime wonderment at the possibilities inherent in their young nation. This thesis recounts the attempts by eleven writers to cut through the shallow materialism and rigid denials of their contemporaries - efforts to force New Zealanders to face up to the mistakes and misapprehensions of one hundred and fifty years of cultural development. Between 1940 and 1983 these writers wrote forcefully, refusing to be lulled into blind obligation to a society essentially at odds with their own beliefs. Sometimes harsh but always direct, the authors of literary critique have presented New Zealanders with a body of work that demands to be read and shared.

Aversion is often a natural outgrowth of love. Although angered and frequently embattled, the writers who engaged in literary critique during late twentieth century New Zealand all shared a deep respect and commitment to their country and its inhabitants, to the point where they each made a stand - a statement of intent and practice that aimed to reveal New Zealanders to themselves regardless of the consequences. As is to be expected, they did not always agree about the salient features of New Zealand culture and what implications these held for its people. While some asserted the need for psychological progression, others demanded a spiritual awakening or a greater level of sociological awareness; others again, a declaration of intellectual independence. The central theme in all of the essays was the utility of literature as a means of both bringing important topics to the surface and effecting a future change in the cultural pattern. Literature (and poetry in particular) was viewed by all the authors as a cathartic exercise that could prompt a redefinition of the very grounds of their culture and society. In New Zealand, literary critique stands alone as a mode of writing that comments upon literature in its deepest relation to the parent culture.

Introduction: 'The Significance of an Invisible Tradition'

> Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity / genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.[1]

"Imagination" has recently become a common ordering principle of much historical and literary-critical activity[2] - to the extent that it would not be surprising if the general reader perceived the term to be totally new and innovative. When applied to nationalism and cultural identity, the term has a certain power to evoke the commonality of experience. Moreover, it allows the historian to move beyond essentialist notions of cultural organisation, and attend to the ways in which identity is formed, contested and (ultimately) redefined. To those that have used the term, "imagination" suggests a means by which national and cultural identity can be explored without a descent into either rigid declarations of nationalist egotism or its obverse - myopic and provincial wailings of derivativeness. The reality behind cultural imaginings (or "inventions" to use a synonymous and similarly useful term) is no longer sought; rather, it is now understood that cultures develop through a complex interaction between individual actors and their inherited tradition. Perceived in this way, cultural identity becomes a process of revolution and reaction against the *imaginings* of a community (its stories about itself), rather than its spiritual or philosophical ground. As Geoffrey Cubitt suggests, "nations are best regarded as imaginative constructs. They develop, no doubt, out of social and political experience, but they are the products of an imaginative ordering of that experience, not its revealed reality".[3]

A history of cultural imaginings can reveal many aspects of the culture in question that were previously hidden. The term allows certain depths to be tapped within a

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[1]Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p.6.
[2]For example; Javed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's *The History of British India* and Orientalism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Geoffrey Cubitt, ed., Imagining Nations (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Deborah Elise White, Romantic Returns: Supersition, Imagination, History (California: Stanford University Press, 2000).
[3]Cubitt, ed., Imagining Nations, p.3.

culture that have been avoided until recently, out of a fear of continuing to strengthen essentialist notions of the nation that are rigid, inscribed with discourses of power and (in some senses, if harnessed to certain ideological perspectives) dangerous. Nevertheless, as Eagleton points out, authors are frequently blind to their own inscriptions and motives, and appear unwilling to accept the deeply contradictory nature of human imagination.[4] The term is not new, and has a very large philosophical tradition attached to it that cannot be ignored. In particular (there is no room here for a detailed examination of the term), it must be recognised that the term cannot remove the inquirer from the subject of inquiry. Transference of intellectual agency towards "discourses", "inventions" or "imaginings" does not remove the central issue of subjectivity in authorship - indeed it simply removes it to a more covert and complex position.[5] This work refuses such a strategy, and does so by simply asserting the *bodily* nature of the imagination first described by Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) in his Tractatus Theologico-Politicus. Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd make the point well:

> as we have seen, imagination involves awareness of other bodies at the same time as our own. Our bodies retain traces of the changes brought about in them by the impinging of other bodies. On this co-presence of things to mind, arising from the structural complexity of the human body, rests the world of ordinary consciousness delivered to us by imagination and memory. A representation can thus be non-actual, in that it has no present cause - no 'impressor' as the Stoics would have said - yet actual,

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[4]Terry Eagleton, The Idea of Culture (Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), pp.47-49.

[5]Martin J. Wiener, 'Treating "Historical" Sources as Literary Texts: Literary Historicism and Modern British History', The Journal of Modern History 70:3 (September 1998), p.619:
"In recent years, a new form of historical writing, produced in growing quantities by members of English departments, has emerged, and professional historians have been for the most part not quite sure how to respond. On the one hand, one wants to welcome the "rediscovery of history" by literary scholars; on the other, the history being rediscovered does not look quite like what most professional historians have thought history to be. Should one welcome the infusion of new energies and new perspectives into historical study, or should one be wary of an intellectual Trojan horse?"

> in that it involves the absent or now non-existent thing being present to it. Summing up this bodily grounding of imagination Michele Bertrand says that for Spinoza 'the body forgets nothing'.[6]

Writing about cultural imaginings is never divorced from bodily experience and it would be a fallacy to suggest that it ever can be. Postmodern strategies that attempt to evade this (basic) facet of historical writing with purely formalist approaches miss the point. In this thesis "imagination" is simply the term used to denote the creative capacities of the central figures, and the study takes a cultural and biographical (as well as textual) approach.

The methodology is straightforward. Specific texts have been selected on the basis of their importance to the textual history of New Zealand, each of them well known as a contribution to the "idea" of New Zealand in cultural, literary and (broadly) philosophical terms.[7] In terms of the canon of New Zealand literature they are unique, representing a third order mode of critical analysis that originated with Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (1781) and slowly extended to encompass culture in general, and literature in particular. The taxonomy of form that underpins this thesis rests solely upon an apprehension of the critical distance reached by these authors - indeed the contribution to knowledge that the thesis offers is based precisely around this point of reference. It is a central concern of the thesis that these essays (properly conceived) demand to be interpreted not only as literary criticism, but as literary critique in the fullest sense of the word.[8] Moreover, despite the obviously literary

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[6]Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.23.

[7]Donald R. Kelley, 'Horizons of Intellectual History: Retrospect, Circumspect, Prospect', Journal of the History of Ideas 48:1 (January-March 1987), pp.148-149:
The history of criticism and "a renewed interest in the history of rhetoric . . . has established ties between literary criticism and philosophy of great importance for intellectual history . . . . [such problems] bear directly (as Lovejoy would probably have agreed) on the study of intellectual history, its conceptual, scholarly, and ideological environment".

[8]Dominick LaCapra, 'Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts', History and Theory 19:3 (1980), p.246:
"In more practical terms, it urges the intellectual historian to learn of developments in other disciplines addressing the problem of interpretation, notably literary criticism and philosophy".

nature of its sources, the study takes a firmly historical stance in relation to textual analysis. Rather than adopt any of the theoretical positions employed by the writers themselves (Leavisite, New Critical, Sociological, Psychological, Cultural, Post-Structural, or Post-Colonial), each essay is presented and evaluated in relation to its particular historical environment. Thus, although the post-colonial perspective (in particular) might provide an especially powerful critical position,[9] its use has been eschewed in the interests of both historical convention and a respect for the intentions of each author. The aim of the thesis is to display a previously unnoticed (and intellectually stimulating) tradition to the reader; not to deconstruct it with contemporary critical tools.[10]

Another significant aspect of the thesis is the delineation of an intellectual genealogy[11] that traces the content of the essays back towards their origin in western civilisation generally, suggesting that the act of colonisation during the nineteenth century implied not only material, but ideological and philosophical transference.[12] Overlaying this factor is the extremely complicated (and perhaps intractable) question of how and in what manner these intangible aspects of colonisation were appropriated into local forms of expression and cultural logic.[13] Although it may sit uneasily with

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[9]See: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

[10]See: Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931), pp.30-31; John Tosh, The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods & New Directions in the Study of Modern History (London and New York: Longman, 1991), pp.144-145; Miles Fairburn, Social History: Problems, Strategies and Methods (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), pp.203-208.

[11]See: Trygve R. Tholfsen, 'The Role of Ideas in the Dynamics of History', in Valentin Vazquez De Prada and Ignacio Olabarri, eds, Understanding Social Change in the Nineties: Theoretical Approaches and Historiographical Perspectives (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), pp.149-171.

[12]cf. John Docker, Australian Cultural Elites: Intellectual Traditions in Sydney and Melbourne (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974), p.ix:
"A key dilemma in Australian literature and culture is the relationship between Australia's European inheritance of ideas, ideologies and assumptions, and the new "Australian" experience and social environments".

[13]Steven Feierman, 'Colonizers, Scholars, and the Creation of Invisible Histories', in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds, Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p.182:
Scholars most attuned to recent developments in history "have taken on the

some readers, this thesis suggests that New Zealand literary critique is not completely derivative of British modes of literary criticism. Rather, it is a local development with a genealogy that should be traced back to the dawn of western civilisation, drawing on various influences over the years for its form and content. This standpoint denies the usefulness of blind adherence to a (negative) provincial attitude towards New Zealand and its cultural products that takes an inward looking, myopic stance, that can only produce a narrative exposing the "derivative" nature of New Zealand culture and society.

The essays commented upon in this thesis do not in the strictest sense of the word constitute a genre. Although it is possible to find theoretical works that would enable the term "genre" to be used, it is my assertion that such a classification would be detrimental to the broader understanding of New Zealand literature. This is in part due to the rather fine distinction between literary criticism and literary critique, and in part due to a belief that the post-modern theories that would enable the term to be used place far too much emphasis upon the "constructed" nature of intellectual discourse. It is a prerogative of history as a discipline to search for internal textual consistencies rather than attempting to create rigid external labels and classificatory devices. Following Alistair Fowler[14] the term *mode* will be preferred here, in reference to the essays being a modal extension of literary criticism proper rather than a genre in its own right.[15] Modal terms never imply a complete external form; they represent a mixture of various generic elements and are thus often amorphous and transitory in historical terms.[16] In light of this fact it is important to note the historically contingent

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paradoxical task of documenting regional cultures while at the same time demonstrating the powerful effects of the global flow of styles, discourses and practices. They have been writing histories of the process by which locally specific forms of hybridity emerge".

[14]Alistair Fowler, Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp.106-111.

[15]Claire Obaldia, The Essayistic Spirit: Literature, Modern Criticism, and the Essay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.22:
"Any [genre] may be extended as a mode, according to Fowler, and the idea of 'modal extension' is used to draw attention to 'the structurally dependent status of mode vis-à-vis [genre]' ".

[16]Yingjin Zhang, 'Narrative, Ideology, Subjectivity: Defining a Subversive Discourse in Chinese Reportage', in Liu Kang and Xiaobing Tang, eds, Politics, Ideology, and Literary Discourse in Modern China: Theoretical Interventions and Cultural

nature of literary critique as a mode of writing. Its appearance in New Zealand during the nineteen-forties was related as much to the exigencies of publication and rather peculiar personal rivalries as to any specific critical dogma or developing cultural philosophy.[17]

As a brief outline, it could be said that the mode represents the efforts of a select group of writers who were attempting to make a name for themselves amidst a society generally apathetic about the development of a literary and cultural identity. Despite having an increasingly rich cultural life at the popular level, New Zealanders did not appear to be interested in the more complex issues associated with the development of a local cultural aesthetic. Because of this, the essays were fresh and often pointed in their criticisms of the New Zealand cultural environment - the exuberant voices of an intellectual minority. More radically, however, the mode can be viewed as the beginning of a local critical tradition of significant worth to New Zealand in not only cultural and literary, but (on occasion) philosophical terms. Literary critique represents the development of a critical theory of New Zealand culture and literature that attempts to delve deeply into the national psyche and formulate an aesthetic that might prompt the beginnings of cultural redefinition. Although the mode divides neatly into three distinct phases (1940-1945, 1945-1970, 1970-1983), the tradition represents both a record of New Zealand's intellectual development on this synchronic plane and the basis for a national aesthetic that might better position the nation as a part of the wider international community. At issue here is the question of

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Critique (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p.211:
As an aside, it can be noted that the development of similar writing occurred in China during the mid-1980s, expanding eventually into historical, sociological, psychological, political, ethical, and economic arenas. Yingjin Zhang has isolated this "mode" (this is the precise term used) of writing and analysed it "in terms of its discursive operation in contemporary Chinese culture".

[17]cf. Kirk A. Denton, ed., "Introduction" to Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature 1893-1945 (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.1:
In Chinese society, the modern literary essay developed from the encroachment of western civilisation and internal political and social erosion. "Intellectuals, the stewards of this elite cultural tradition, were compelled to confront fundamental questions about the origins of this cultural collapse and the sources of China's future rejuvination. This process of intellectual exploration and the move toward modernity was embodied in, among other things, writings about literature, which stands at the very heart of this cultural tradition".

New Zealand's diachronic relation to late twentieth century trends in the critical theory of culture and its involvement in the broader development of western civilisation.[18]

In this sense, the identification of literary critique as a distinct mode represents an attempt to distinguish a nascent tradition of advanced scholarship that demands further extrapolation. As MacDonald P. Jackson points out, traditions are defined "when texts begin to respond to their predecessors".[19] It follows that without adequate classification there can be no adequate response. And yet literary critique is absent as a mode of classification in all literary and cultural histories of New Zealand. There is no mention of it in The Oxford History of New Zealand,[20] The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature,[21] The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English[22] or The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature.[23] It has not been identified in any published scholarly articles or theses in New Zealand or overseas and as such it remains invisible as a possible source of cultural, literary, or historical interpretation.[24] This is due to a lack of specialisation that can only occur as literatures age, and justification for a new literary mode must promise more than mere historical and cultural elaboration. It must adhere to contemporary demands surrounding knowledge construction and the role of taxonomy in the humanities as a whole.

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[18]Obaldia, The Essayistic Spirit, pp.7-8:
"The notion of 'literature *in potentia*' which the essay exemplifies must therefore be tackled from both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective". Note here that Obaldia defines the "synchronic" as imagination or style, and the "diachronic" as etymology or genealogy.

[19]MacDonald P. Jackson, 'Poetry: Beginnings to 1945', in Terry Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.402.

[20]Geoffrey Rice, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[21]Patrick Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Penguin, 1990).

[22]Terry Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[23]R. Robinson and N. Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[24]See: Mark Williams, Post-Colonial Literatures in English: Southeast Asia, New Zealand, and the Pacific 1970-1992 (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996).

When we study literary texts from the standpoint of generic or modal classifications, cultural and stylistic conventions become apparent that make it possible to discern how the works function within their cultural environment. The notion is that "the arts provide a form of knowledge through the kinds of examples they establish".[25] Recourse to specific modal forms is in this sense a basic element in both the construction and elucidation of humanistic knowledge. The literary scholar John Frow has commented on the need to develop more sophisticated modes of classification to enhance the value of such knowledge into the future:

> I suggest, by contrast, that the value of the so-called humanities, and more specifically of the disciplines of literary studies, can be defended only by taking to its radical conclusions the critique of the essentialist and foundational categories that have governed the humanities' formation. This sets us the more difficult task of elaborating theoretical categories and practices of reading that do not essentialize the domain of literature or of culture; which can account for social and cultural difference and inequality of power on a number of dimensions; which refuse to give specific aesthetic or ethical values an absolute status (and which thereby relativize and situate their own position); and which can develop a new understanding of the ends of textual study.[26]

Similarly, in the historical profession John R. Hall has called for the development of modes of inquiry that are capable of analysing the "sophisticated poststructuralist and reflexive critiques that have become so important in broader social and humanistic

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[25]Charles Altieri, 'Literary Reference and Literary Experience as a Means of Knowledge', in Charles Altieri, Act and Quality: A Theory of Literary Meaning and Humanistic Understanding (Brighton: The Harvester Press Ltd, 1981), p.281.
[26]John Frow, 'The Social Production of Knowledge and the Discipline of English', Meanjin 49:2 (Winter 1990), p.358.

inquiry".[27] It is this kind of logic that legitimates the development of new modes of literature, as a prompt to both cultural and academic development. The following chapter will illustrate how literary critique is a mode that demands a place in the taxonomy of New Zealand literature in both the cultural and academic sense. The standpoint adopted (an assertion of the bodily nature of the imagination) will be left behind at this point, except for a final assertion of its central assumption:

> Before the historian can bring to bear upon the data of the historical field the conceptual apparatus he will use to represent and explain it, he must first *pre*figure the field - that is to say, constitute it as an object of mental perception. This poetic act is indistinguishable from the linguistic act in which the field is made ready for interpretation as a domain of a particular kind. That is to say, before a given domain can be interpreted, it must first be construed as a ground inhabited by discernible figures. The figures, in turn, must be conceived to be classifiable as distinctive orders, classes, genera, and species of phenomena.[28]

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[27]John R. Hall, 'Cultural Meanings and Cultural Structures in Historical Explanation', History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History 39:3 (2000), p.331.
[28]Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p.30.

Part One: The Global Mirror

Chapter One: 'A Cultural Genealogy and a Modal Typology'

> Cultural genealogy is best understood as simultaneously a conviction and a practice - a conviction regarding the link to past civilizations and the practice of selecting suitable origins.[1]

i] Literary Critique: Form and Function

Literary critique is expressed through the essay form, a factor that confers much of the mode's imaginative capabilities and provides an inherent unity of purpose and freedom of expression. Underlying this basic form is a functional mechanism of significant complexity, but it is the essay form that provides the mode with its initial boundaries. Graham Good notes the development of the essay form out of Montaigne's Essais (1580), and its development in the English language through Francis Bacon's Essays (1597).[2] It should be noted in this context that the essay form developed co-extensively with the onset of the renaissance and a trend towards humanistic scholarship that flattered the observer with a much higher degree of authority than had hitherto been accepted by medieval scholars imbued with a sense of the divine nature of all knowledge.[3] Similarly, the rise of the middle-class across Europe tended to further democratise knowledge construction and allowed intellectuals to formulate their own systems outside the power structures of feudal society.[4] These trends were coupled with "a new historical outlook, a new ethical

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[1]Raphael Falco, 'Is There A Genealogy of Cultures?', Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts 42:4 (Fall, 2000), p.396.
[2]Graham Good, The Observing Self: Rediscovering the Essay (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p.10.
[3]Quentin Skinner, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, vol. 1: The Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.101-112.
[4]cf. Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.25:
"The emergent middle class, in an historic development, is newly defining itself as a universal subject. But the abstraction this process entails is a source of anxiety for a class wedded in its robust individualism to the concrete and the particular. If the aesthetic intervenes here, it is as a dream of reconciliation – of individuals woven into intimate unity with no detriment to their specificity, of an abstract totality suffused with all the flesh-and-blood reality of the individual

attitude which opposed the scholars' withdrawal from social obligations . . ."[5] and transformed the intellectual into an active participant in society. The definition of an essay as "an attempt; a tentative effort: a first draft: a trial"[6] likewise relates to this development of systems of knowledge that allowed experimentation and theorising as a precursor to the construction of new paradigms of understanding.[7] Symbolic of this new mode of thinking were figures such as Copernicus, Descartes, and Galileo who each acknowledged the need to put age-old presuppositions to the test in a manner that would challenge the very foundations of their societies.[8]

Reda Bensmaia revealingly suggests that "the Essay appears historically as one of the rare literary texts whose apparent principal task was to provoke a "generalized collapse" of the economies of the rhetorically coded text . . .",[9] in that what is most important to the essayist is not necessarily intellectual finality, but complication. The essay's central tone is *freedom*; a movement away from centres of power and influence towards the contingent, the spontaneous, and assertions of personal intellectual independence. Good suggests in this context that the essay is the most personal literary form outside the diary,[10] with tendencies towards existentialist declarations of self and a level of social and cultural disinterest that amounts to "self-critique"[11] in that the knowledge gained is never declared final. Indeed the only way the essay form promotes closure is in a personal and aesthetic sense, because the exercise ends through nothing other than a re-situation of the self in relation to the

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being".
[5]Hans Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1955), p.6.
[6]William Geddie, ed., Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary (Edinburgh and London: W. & R. Chambers Ltd, 1968), p.364.
[7]Michael L. Hall, 'The Emergence of the Essay and the Idea of Discovery', in Alexander J. Butrym, ed., Essays on the Essay: Redefining the Genre (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), p.78.
[8]Seyla Benhabib, Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.271.
[9]Reda Bensmaia, The Barthes Effect: The Essay as Reflective Text, trans. Pat Fedkiew (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p.99.
[10]Good, The Observing Self, p.8.
[11]ibid, p.11.

object of inquiry.[12] It is for this reason that critics frequently liken the essay form to the Greek sea-god Proteus who assumed many different shapes in order to evade having to foretell the future.[13] In this mythic sense, closure in the essay is only achieved aesthetically, after an investigation of the author's immediate reaction to a given topic so that "[t]he essay offers knowledge of the moment, not more".[14]

In the final analysis any claim to justifiable knowledge gained from the essay form rests upon an intensely personal acuity, but it is this very factor that commends it to further study. The essay form is personal, open and frequently opposed to pre-existing social or intellectual power structures, making a modal analysis of certain specific forms ideal in both the cultural and academic contexts. While the form confers a broad semblance of unity on literary critique as a mode and makes it fruitful for detailed study, its inherently protean nature excludes its use as a means of precise definition, however. More important, in terms of the functioning of literary critique in New Zealand culture, is its internal mechanic - the process of "critique" itself, as it is this (and "literary" critique in particular) that makes it a specific and utilitarian focus of analysis.

In ancient terminology critique was indistinguishable from criticism proper. Both words derive from the notion of "judgment"[15] that was implicit in the Greek words *kritikos* (one who is able to judge) and *kritike* (the critical art). In etymology both words referred to "the nature of a crisis, decisive, crucial . . ."[16] and were suggestive of someone who was practised in the art of interpretation, be it of a medical, literary or historical nature. The concept entered the English language during the seventeenth century[17] with these same connotations but it was only with the onset of the enlightenment during the eighteenth century that a clear distinction came to be

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[12]ibid, p.12.
[13]O. B.. Hardison, 'Binding Proteus: An Essay on the Essay, in Butrym, ed., Essays on the Essay, pp.11-28.
[14]Good, The Observing Self, p.8.
[15]R. K. Barnhart, ed., The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p.177.
[16]ibid.
See also: Eric Partridge, Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p.130.
[17]Bayle's, Dictionnaire Historique et Critique (1697) was integral to this process.

formed between the practice of criticism and critique. The basis of critique, like criticism itself, is therefore "judgment".

The development of critique as a concept by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) during the late eighteenth century and the extension of his ideas by Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) in the following century are crucial to an understanding of the functioning of critique as a mode of humanistic and cultural knowledge. It is the foundation of critique in enlightenment philosophy that lends the mode its interpretative power and significance as a tool of critical inquiry.[18] Of particular interest to literary critique in the New Zealand context is the difference between its two main forms, "*institutional* critique and *transformative* critique . . .".[19]

Kant's three critiques, beginning with the Critique of Pure Reason (1781), set the concept into its modern form by equating it inseparably with reason itself.[20] Critique became a concept that implied an exploration of philosophy from the standpoint of the ontological presuppositions that grounded reason as the basis of knowledge. Kant's critiques aimed to find "the invariant conditions that govern the existence of any phenomena",[21] extracting reason from its position as an infallible creator of knowledge and pointing out that the mind does not necessarily receive objectively dependable data from the external world. "[T]he mind itself always enters into that which it perceives and understands".[22] Institutional critique aims to elucidate the grounds of human experience by applying reason to the point where all human knowledge is revealed as being contingent upon specific historical instances. The insights thus gained tend to be reductive in the sense that all phenomena are viewed

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[18]Kevin Kerrane, 'Nineteenth-Century Backgrounds of Modern Aesthetic Criticism', in O. B. Hardison, ed., The Quest For Imagination: Essays in Twentieth-Century Aesthetic Criticism (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971), pp.3-25.

[19]Robert Davis and Ronald Schleifer, Criticism and Culture: The Role of Critique in Modern Literary Theory (Essex: Longman, 1991), p.22 (Davis and Schleifer's emphasis).

[20]The argument could be made that Kant's third critique, Critique of Judgement (1790), is more pointedly related to literary critique (as an aesthetic practice), but my purpose here is to provide an etymology of "critique", rather than a philosophical analysis of aesthetics in general.

[21]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, p.23.

[22]Kerrane, 'Nineteenth-Century Backgrounds of Modern Aesthetic Criticism', p.4.

within the context of infinite space and time - in the most basic sense, institutional critique is what most people would understand "philosophy" to be:

> Now from all this there results the idea of a special science, which can be called the **critique of pure reason**. For reason is the faculty that provides the principles of cognition *a priori*. Hence pure reason is that which contains the principles for cognizing something absolutely *a priori*.[23]

It was Hegel's appropriation of the Kantian philosophy that led to the mode of critique practised in the New Zealand context, however, because instead of simply reducing human activity to its ontological ground he asserted that things could be otherwise - that knowledge of the historically contingent nature of reality implied in itself that humanity had the ability to alter the course of history through active participation in those same historical forces. The label given to this mode of critique is therefore "transformative".[24] Transformative critique aims at first identifying and then altering false or distorted consciousness. It is out of this branch of critique that the modern study of "culture" evolved, primarily from the insight that in anthropological terms "[t]he symbolic representations that constitute human knowing are, in their various groupings, classifications and manifestations, the *cultural*".[25] As Hegel put it:

> It is therefore through culture that the individual acquires standing and actuality. His true *original nature* and substance is the alienation of himself as Spirit from his *natural* being. This externalization is, therefore, both the purpose and the existence of the individual . . .[26]

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[23]Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.149 (Kant's emphasis).
[24]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, p.25.
[25]Chris Jenks, Culture (London: Routledge, 1995), p.8 (Jenks' emphasis).
[26]G. W. F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon

Such insights freed the scope of critical activity by allowing critics to analyse cultural artefacts of any kind independently from the culture in which they arose, looking instead at psychological motives and theories of cultural production in general. Marxist theory was a classic example of this mode, because it asserted the need to actively enter the historical dialectic in order to precipitate change. Similarly, Freudian analysis pointed out false conceptions of human psychology and replaced them with a new paradigm that asserted both the force of unconscious motivations and the fact that "*rationality is itself a subjective phenomenon*".[27] Transformative critique aims to identify distorted conceptions of reality and replace them with new (and supposedly more functional) concepts.[28] Few practitioners of literary critique in New Zealand profess forceful ideological positions, but the *process* of (transformative) critique that underlies their work justifies a modal study of its applications in the New Zealand context, because it represents an active dissection of contingent historical reality and proposes alternative modes of thought and action. Moreover, the mode is suggestive of a group of people strangely positioned both within and against their culture. Terry Eagleton put the matter succinctly when he noted that:

> The most effective critique of Bourgeois society is accordingly one that like Marxism is "immanent", installing itself within the very logic of that order's most cherished values in order to unmask the necessary disconnection of this ideal universal realm from the sordidly particularistic appetites it serves to mystify.[29]

Press, 1977), p.298 (Hegel's emphasis).

[27]David Bleich, 'The Subjective Character of Critical Interpretation', in K. M. Newton, ed., Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1997), p.201 (Bleich's emphasis).

[28]Herbert J. Gans, Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1974), p.52:
"the critique is a plea for an ideal way of life guided by the humanist dictates of high culture that emerged during the Enlightenment and by the standards of humanist thinkers who place a high value on personal autonomy, individual creativity, and the rejection of group norms".

[29]Terry Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', in Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Edward W. Said, Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature (Minneapolis:

Both institutional and transformative critique (in their "pure" forms) are absent in the New Zealand context. Rather, in line with conceptions of the interaction between literature and national identity that developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (and perhaps in cognisance of the fact that literature was a central bastion of New Zealand's most cherished values), transformative critique was applied to the literary sphere - it situated literature "as a *cultural* phenomenon which calls for the terrible learning of critique".[30] This developing relationship between literature and critical theory was implicit in the elaboration of transformative critique after Hegel. Once the relationship of humanity to the ultimate ground of reality was conceived as essentially historical, art and literature acquired a position as tangible manifestations of (in Hegel's terms) the "absolutization of Spirit".[31] Literature came to be viewed as an evidential trace of humanity's position in space and time, capable of offering emancipatory knowledge in the face of the relentless process of historical change.[32] The onset of the industrial revolution made such a promise even more enticing as historical change quickened and old forms of knowledge quickly became obsolete. As the twentieth century approached, literature began to gain increasing importance as a fount of social and cultural knowledge, and critics like Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling slowly began to "bring literary analysis to cultural critique",[33] in a manner that would eventually find its way to New Zealand.

ii] 'Interim Mechanisms: Culture and the Institutionalisation of English Studies'

The development of literary critique in New Zealand was dependent upon an ability to conflate the two entrenched strains of critical analysis in New Zealand - cultural criticism and literary criticism,[34] because for centuries there had been an

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University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p.31.
[30]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, p.3 (Davis and Schleifer's emphasis).
[31]Gianni Vattimo, 'Postmodern Criticism: Postmodern Critique', in David Wood, ed., Writing the Future (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p.60.
[32]Johann Friedrich von Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man (1793-1795) was the first example of this new perspective.
[33]Mark Bauerlein, Literary Criticism: An Autopsy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p.23.
[34]For an analysis of the historical tradition in New Zealand see:

unwillingness on the part of literary critics to reconcile their craft to a study of the cultural environment. As far back as the aesthetic theories of Johann Frederich von Schiller in the eighteenth century, there had been a belief in the "intentional fallacy"[35] which forbade critics from identifying the meaning of a text with its author's intention. This led to what Simon During has noted was a "practical injunction"[36] to leave biography and historical documentation out of critical procedures. The text was seen as a commodity that was useful as an object of inquiry so long as potentially distracting cultural and historical elements were kept out of the analysis. Naturally this tended to keep the two sides in the genealogy of New Zealand literary critique apart, because the literary and cultural elements had been seen for centuries as irreconcilable. What was required was a theory of literature that would take into account Hegel's injunction that artistic and literary objects were, in the final analysis, manifestations of the historical and cultural environment. In other words, literary criticism had to evolve towards critique. Three aspects of late nineteenth and early twentieth century history governed this development; the developing articulation of culture as a mode of humanistic inquiry, the institutionalisation of English literature as an apparatus of state influence, and the development within literary criticism of schools of thought that made culture the focus of their literary inquiries.

a] Culture

The development of cultural theory during the late nineteenth century was essential to the development of literary critique. Indeed Davis and Schleiffer go so far as to state that "critique cannot proceed without an engagement with cultural analysis",[37] so a basic understanding of the theory of culture is useful at this point.[38] An analysis of

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Chris Hilliard, Island Stories: The Writing of New Zealand History 1920-1940 (M. A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1997); Grant Young, The War of Intellectual Independence: New Zealand Historians and Their History, 1945-1972 (M. A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1998).

[35]Simon During, 'From the New Historicism to Cultural Studies', in Robert Lumsden and Rajeev Patke, eds, Institutions in Cultures: Theory and Practice (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), p.55.

[36]ibid, p.56.

[37]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, p.ix.

[38]Chris Jenks' Culture is central to this section. For a more detailed analysis of the term see; Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society

cultural theory needs to be approached in four ways, beginning with the anthropological notion of culture as a mediating factor between man and nature - as a concept that traces in material artefacts and ways of life the various means by which humanity has adjusted to natural demands over the centuries.[39] Such a conception is clearly a basic meaning of the term, because it applies to all human history. Use of the word can be traced back to the fifteenth century where it referred to "tending, care, cultivation . . .".[40] A second early sense of culture derives from classical society where "[c]ivilization"[41] embodied certain distinctions between the ruling elites of Ancient Greece and Rome and the barbarians that threatened them. Culture in this sense refers to membership in an elite group and is symbolic of education and personal cultivation that mark the boundaries of that group. More important for the development of literary critique is the conception of culture that was first recorded in English in 1875,[42] where the meaning of culture was altered from being a mediating factor between man and nature, to one that mediates between man and machine.[43]

The previous two interpretations of culture (the sense of culture as a mediating factor between man and his environment and the notion of personal cultivation) were subsumed in this third conception when culture was enlisted to offset what was perceived to be an increasing gap between the creative and productive forces of society. With the onset of the industrial revolution and rapid technological change "[t]he machine was viewed as devouring the natural character of humankind . . .",[44] and people began to enlist culture as an antidote to social decay. In one sense this accounts for Marx's focus on economic forces and their effect on personal and national identity and in another sense it accounts for Carlyle's focus on the loss of a

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(London: Fontana/Croom Helm, 1976), pp.76-82; Sewell, William H., 'The Concept(s) of Culture', in Victoria E. Bonnel and Lynn Hunt, eds, Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp.35-61; Richard Biernacki, 'Language and the Shift From Signs to Practices in Cultural Inquiry', History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History 39:3 (October 2000), pp.289-310; Terry Eagleton, The Idea of Culture (Malden: Blackwell, 2000).

[39]Jenks, Culture, pp.8-9.

[40]Barnhart, The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology, p.178.

[41]Jenks, Culture, p.7.

[42]Barnhart, The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology, p.178.

[43]Jenks, Culture, p.7.

[44]ibid.

folk purity of the past, but either way this articulation of culture aimed to rectify the excesses of modernity with mass education and personal cultivation. The nineteenth century understanding of culture was therefore an extension of earlier conceptions, but had developed (through its romantic associations) a utilitarian focus that railed against "the mire of commerce and industry, activities that blunted the senses, narrowed the mind, killed the imagination".[45]

One final embellishment was required in the context of literary critique, however, and this was the philosophical reduction of the theory into a normative term for all human activity. Moving back towards the notion of culture as a mediating factor between man and nature, culture came to be viewed as a realm of representation that included any manifestation of human activity.[46] In line with Hegelian critique, the cultural came to refer to any symbolic representation that constituted human knowing, be it religion, art, pottery or literature. At this point the cycle of meaning that constitutes the modern understanding of culture was complete (although it should be noted that the term actually embodies all four meanings within itself - the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). By the late nineteenth century when literary critics began to look towards cultural analysis, the term had evolved into a mode of anthropological, sociological and philosophical inquiry, and a means of cultivating certain desirable traits in the individual and society.

b] The Institutionalisation of English Studies

The institutionalisation of English as an apparatus of state and cultural influence was also central to the development of literary critique. It is a literary mode permeated by issues of power and cultural influence.[47] Unlike Chris Baldick, who argues that literary studies were not linked to government in a practical sense until World War One,[48] proponents of a more thoroughgoing tradition suggest that elements of just

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[45]Jacques Barzun, From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life 1500 to the Present (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), p.474.
[46]Jenks, Culture, p.8.
[47]See: Susan Tenenbaum, 'The Coppet Circle: Literary Criticism as Political Discourse' History of Political Thought 1:3 (December 1980), pp.453-473.
[48]Chris Baldick, The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932 (Oxford:

such a relationship were present for several preceding centuries. Franklin Court[49] is one scholar who argues for a conception of literary history that takes into account these formative efforts at an institutionalisation of the subject, and his position has a major impact on conceptions of literary history in the New Zealand context. Court points to Scotland as the centre of a move towards the institutionalisation of English literature, with developments traceable back to the seventeenth century with the accession of James VI in 1603.[50] At the same time as notions of culture were being elaborated into their modern form, Scottish universities established chairs in English studies, ironically on the basis of a cultural nationalism that asserted the need to develop a local culture that could offset the hegemony of England in the south. These early theorists viewed English as an excellent means of educating the population in matters of conduct and taste, thus cementing the discipline in pedagogical imperatives.[51] Of central importance here is the question of literary inheritance and its transmission to the colonial context, and in particular an understanding that diminishes the role of later theorists of international renown during the mid-twentieth century.

Chris Worth's essay "A Centre at the Edge" is useful as an account of the transmission of English studies (and by implication the central elements of literary critique) to the New Zealand context, remarking that "the initial development of literary education in the southern colonies was marked by a robust validation of rhetorical composition and philosophic thought, as opposed to cultural refinement or national myth-making".[52] Worth's point is not so much that literary study in the colonies was entirely conservative and derivative of British techniques, as that key figures in the colonies pressed their concerns for a literary culture within a certain

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Clarendon Press, 1983), p.86.

[49]Franklin E. Court, Institutionalizing English Literature: The Culture and Politics of Literary Study, 1750-1900 (California: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[50]ibid, p.17.

[51]Ian Hunter, 'Literary Theory in Civil Life', The South Atlantic Quarterly 95:4 (Fall 1996), p.1124:
"Literary criticism is connected to the sphere of government through pedagogical deployment . . ."

[52]Chris Worth, ''A Centre at the Edge': Scotland and the Early Teaching of Literature in Australia and New Zealand', in Robert Crawford, ed., The Scottish Invention of English Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.207.

understanding of their situation. Several New Zealand historians have pointed to the dominance of Scottish settlers in Otago in the development of a national university system, for example, noting that they "brought with them the enthusiasm for education which was characteristic of their homeland".[53] Rather than being determined to further the "validation of rhetorical composition and philosophic thought", some university teachers like John Mainwaring Brown were enthusiastic about the applications of literary analysis in the new context of the colonial world: "To contemplate literature as a part of the growth of society, is the final work of the student".[54] Worth notes that despite the strong Scottish influence in Otago, the main strides in early New Zealand English studies actually came from Anglican Christchurch, where Professor John Macmillan Brown often lectured to packed halls with a pedagogy richly imbued with both the English and Scottish traditions. Brown was heavily influenced by Carlyle, and as such stressed the importance of literature to modern society.[55] Like Carlyle, Brown believed that the discipline of English was capable of a full engagement with an emerging society.[56] In this manner English studies began a largely local history in New Zealand, eventually being coupled to notions of national and cultural development that developed after Brown and his admirers. While the influence of international trends in literary scholarship and theory cannot be discounted, they can be usefully viewed as genealogical ties, rather than central elements of the tradition.

Four elements combined to prompt the institutionalisation of English as a pedagogical tool across the English speaking world: the attacks on the classical curriculum of the grammar schools (implicit even in eighteenth century pedagogy), Matthew Arnold's post-romantic campaign to install literary culture at the centre of popular education, the tradition of analysis that stressed the threat to culture posed by the industrialisation of community life and the commercialisation of culture itself, and the progressive and experimental education system of the early twentieth century that

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[53]Hugh Parton, The University of New Zealand (Auckland: Auckland University Press / Oxford University Press, 1979), p.15.
[54]John Mainwaring Brown, cited in Chris Worth, 'A Centre at the Edge', p.217.
[55]Worth, 'A Centre at the Edge', p.219.
[56]ibid, p.220.

stressed the creativity of the child-mind and the need for a non-coercive pedagogy.[57] By the early twentieth century it was believed that the study of English would meet all four of these requirements, and as a result most governments accepted an institutionalisation of the discipline and developed curricula that placed a high importance on literary analysis and topics that would induce a deeper understanding of personal identity.[58] In New Zealand, the 1877 Education Act established a system of (primary) education that was free, secular and compulsory, and over the years the dominance of classics, history and civics in the curriculum was eroded.[59] In 1908 the Education Department made English a compulsory subject.[60] A general liberal education was viewed as a means by which New Zealand could develop its egalitarian ethos and make best use of its human resources:

> Talent and genius are not the exclusive privilege of any class of society, and the country that suffers the smallest proportion of these inestimable natural endowments to go to waste will assuredly be of the best fitted to hold its own in the national struggle for prosperity.[61]

Literary critique was a mode of analysis that fitted neatly into the requirements of the modern education system, because it suggested new ways in which the relationship between literature and society might be conceptualised. In this sense literary critique developed as a tool for the elucidation of literary knowledge, using the essay form for ease of transmission and freedom of expression. Examples of literary critique like F. R. Leavis' "Literature and Society"[62] reflected this use of the form to effect both pedagogical and cultural change. Once established in this manner, literary critique became a testing ground for cultural theory - and in its transformative

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[57]Margaret Mathieson, cited in, Ian Hunter, Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), p.33.
[58]Hunter, Culture and Government, pp.33ff.
[59]Roy Shuker, The One Best System? A Revisionist History of State Schooling in New Zealand (Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press Ltd., 1987), pp.36ff.
[60]ibid, p.157.
[61]Prof. D. Shand (1878), cited in Shuker, The One Best System?, p.49.
[62]F. R. Leavis, 'Literature and Society', in F. R. Leavis, The Common Pursuit (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), pp.182-194.

guise a means by which national identity could be taught and embellished. Primarily, the aim was to establish English as the central discipline in a new system of mass education that had been developing since the onset of the industrial revolution, and literary critique was one form in which such an institutionalisation was both debated and perpetuated. Once established as a didactic tool, English studies (and with it, literary critique) was poised to establish itself as a major component in the emerging international environment.

iii] 'Cultural Roots: The Terrible Learning of Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling'

> Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee
> and before thou comest forth out of the womb
> I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet
> unto the nations.
>
> Jeremiah 1:5.

The broad historical background outlined above does not go far enough in describing the central concerns of New Zealand literary critique. In order to suggest what specific concerns New Zealand literary critique might be expected to attend to, it is necessary to construct a typology[63] of form that examines prior examples and practitioners of the mode.[64] In the interests of cogency only four critics will be examined, each representing the development of post-romantic ideas that asserted a desperate need for a social clerisy (based around artists and critics) that could provide a core of values for wider society.[65]

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[63]Geddie, ed., Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, p.1191:
"**typologist; typology,** the study of types and their succession in biology, archaeology, &c.: the doctrine that things in the New Testament are foreshadowed symbolically in the Old . . ."

[64]R. S. Crane, "Introduction" to R. S. Crane et al., Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), p.5:
In a similar methodological stance, this work aimed to "explore the possibility of a general critique of literary criticism (defined as any reasoned and systematic discourse about the poetic arts and their products) such as might yield objective criteria for interpreting the diversities and oppositions among critics . . .".

[65]cf. Docker, Australian Cultural Elites, pp.ix-x:

The historical background of Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling[66] is best described in relation to the "cultural mission"[67] of late Victorian England that developed out of romantic ideas associated with William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). These two figures are widely held to be the progenitors of the English romantic spirit in art and literature[68] - their philosophies largely derived from the Germanic romantic tradition surrounding Johann Goethe (1749-1832).[69] Much of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's "romanticism" can be explained through reference to two key ideas: nature and imagination.[70] Both men were especially concerned to move away from the "mechanical artifice"[71] associated with the developing industrial revolution of nineteenth century Europe. Like Carlyle, Wordsworth and Coleridge lamented the passing of traditional folk culture and asserted the need to meditate upon natural beauty:

> as to nature. We must imitate nature! yes, but what in nature,-

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Sydney and Melbourne's social and aesthetic attitudes developed through the thought of Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and F. R. Leavis "in seeing literature and knowledge as central to society. It is a tradition which goes back to Coleridge's social thinking, and his idea that "cultural" values are embodied in a "clerisy", a central educated group, which stands as an ideal for the rest of society".

[66]It would be an interesting exercise to trace the genealogy of other examples of the mode, such as the Chinese. Although not widespread, it is worth noting that this practice has become more prevalent within certain areas. For example, see Latin America; Raymond Leslie Williams, 'Literary Criticism and Cultural Observation: Recent Studies on Twentieth Century Latin American Literature', Latin American Research Review 21:1 (1986), pp.258-269. For Africa, see; Jeff Guy, 'Class, Imperialism and Literary Criticism: William Ngidi, John Colenso and Matthew Arnold', Journal of Southern African Studies 23:2 (June 1997), pp.219-241.

[67]Ian Reid, 'Fathering the Man: Journalism, Masculinity, and the Wordsworthian Formation of Academic Literary Studies in Victorian England', Journal of Victorian Culture 6.2 (Autumn 2001), p.201.

[68]Margaret Drabble and Jenny Stringer, eds, The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.116.

[69]Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) acted as an interim figure in this Anglo-Germanic relationship by translating Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprentice (1824) and Wilhelm Meister's Travels (1827).

[70]The transference of these ideas to the New Zealand context during the nineteenth-century demands further investigation, but is unfortunately outside the scope of this thesis.

[71]J. Douglas Kneale, 'William Wordsworth', in Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, eds, The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.746.

> all and everything? No, the beautiful in nature. And what then is the beautiful? What is beauty? It is, in the abstract, the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse; in the concrete, it is the union of the shapely (*formosum*) with the vital.[72]

Nature came to be viewed as a redemptive force; a field of experience where masculinity could combat the increasingly uncontrollable processes of urbanisation and industrialisation, through character development and meditative silence.[73] Meditation upon nature was to provide the impetus for the poet-critic to return to his society with hard-won metaphysical insight. Intellectuals that had done so would then form the basis of a secular clerisy that could both inform and educate the general population. The redemptive potential of nature thus lay at the core of romantic thought. As will be seen, the shift from this romantic perspective to a post-romantic one was largely dependent upon the substitution of nature for "culture" by Matthew Arnold (the need for a social clerisy was to remain, albeit in various different guises).

The second main concern of Wordsworth and Coleridge was to raise the significance of the human creative faculties to new heights. In the absence of traditional (religious) forms of value creation, imagination came to be lauded as the only justifiable source of knowledge outside the empirical sciences. In the romantic vision, imagination (or "genius") came to be seen as the most important source of higher knowledge:

> Imagination - here the Power so called
> Through sad incompetence of human speech,
> That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
> Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps . . .[74]

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[72]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Coalescence of Mind and Nature', in Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, eds, The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.45.
[73]Reid, 'Fathering the Man', pp.212-213.
[74]William Wordsworth, 'Natural Apocalypse', in Ellmann and Feidelson, eds, The Modern Tradition, p.58.

Of course, it was the poetic imagination that was held in highest esteem by romanticists. This was because poetic personalities would (supposedly) gain the most insight from nature, and be capable of expressing their newfound wisdom in an accessible form - poets came to be viewed as the modern Jeremiahs. In order to detail a historical precedence for their position, many romantic poets and critics also asserted a "Horatian"[75] authority that claimed descent from classical sources. As has been seen, this claim to genealogical precedence usually implied a quasi-religious role as well. In their increasingly secular society it was felt that versifiers held the key to future social development - inhabiting the gap left by the prophets of the Old Testament like Jeremiah. The power of this newly secularised vision was such that it continued as a central presupposition of literary criticism until the late twentieth century:

> The period has been one of a great general cultural upheaval, in which mass literacy and the enormous increase in the power and range of mass media have been accompanied by an apparently final decay and disintegration of traditional sanctions of belief and behaviour. Thus the literary tradition comes to have a greater importance than ever, as on it alone now depends the possibility of maintaining a link with the past by which we can draw on the collective experience of the race. We are at a stage in civilization which demands more and more consciousness, when the individual cannot be left to be formed by the environment but must be trained to discriminate and resist.[76]

Jacques Barzun suggests that the romantic impulse was dominated by the

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[75]This term refers to Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65BC-8BC), the first ever poet-critic.

[76]Andor Gomme, 'Criticism and the Reading Public', in B. Ford, ed., The Pelican Guide to English Literature, vol.7: The Modern Age (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), p.351.

imagination. The key to the European intellectual hierarchy (that was comprised at its highest levels by figures like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, and Johann Goethe) lay in a conception of Man "as a creature that feels and can think".[77] Genius came to be viewed as a productive power present only in great men, who were capable of tapping the depths of their imagination before expressing it in concrete and lasting terms. Surely the archetype for this understanding of creativity was Goethe, whose two part poem Faust (1808-1832) recounted the descent of the protagonist into the underworld in a narrative of spiritual corruption and, finally, redemption. The work can be read as a metaphor for a commonly held romantic impulse - the desire to delve deeply into the self in order to return to society with the wisdom of the prophets. In England these sentiments are perhaps best expressed in an excerpt from Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798). Personal suffering was implicit in the act of self-discovery:

> Alone, alone, all, all alone,
> Alone on a wide wide sea!
> And never a saint took pity on
> My soul in agony.[78]

Romanticism began to decline in European art and literature during the mid-nineteenth century, for cultural as well as intellectual reasons. The age of discovery was ending (the settlement of New Zealand in 1840 can usefully be viewed as the beginning of the end of romanticism - the known world had been charted, explored and colonised, leaving much less scope for fanciful intellectual adventures) and Charles Darwin's The Origin of the Species (1859) was soon to appear. Darwin's seminal work shattered many romantic conceptions of Man as a charmed and potentially prophetic animal: henceforth the dictum was to be "Survival of the Fittest". The Origin of the Species had the effect of removing human agency from intellectual thought, replacing it instead with the theory of natural selection that

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[77]Barzun, From Dawn to Decadence, p.470.
[78]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', in A. Allison et al., eds, The Norton Anthology of Poetry (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1983), p.573.

asserted a mechanistic evolutionary development.[79] This was essentially the death-knell for romanticism, because human will was no longer viewed as paramount and all-powerful. Agency was transferred to the anonymous forces of production, consumption and "culture". It is no coincidence that Karl Marx (1818-1883) published Das Kapital (1867) soon after Darwin's revolutionary theory had been disseminated and popularised. In conjunction with increasing industrialisation and the approach of the modern age it was felt necessary to enlist culture, not human willpower alone, as an antidote to chaos and decay. The movement from romanticism to post-romanticism thus represented a parallel shift from the ascendancy of human will, to the ascendancy of "culture" in all its evolutionary, intellectual, and economic guises.[80] The violence of cultural change in the period between the romantic and post-romantic eras should not be underestimated - the appearance in England of Matthew Arnold was indicative of a deep schism in intellectual thought. Like his predecessors, Arnold trenchantly believed that society was undergoing a period of disintegration brought on by rapid industrialisation and a breakdown in traditional community values, but unlike them he aimed to reverse the process not with nature but "culture". Works like Culture and Anarchy (1869)[81] marked a general "philosophical revival"[82] in literary studies that stressed the study of cultural history and the metaphysics of language as a means of reversing social decay. Indeed it has been suggested that the concept of culture during this period was "largely the province of the literary intellectuals"[83] like Matthew Arnold, who applied the precepts of Hegelian (transformative) critique to literary analysis. Now understood as a *cultural* "absolutization of Spirit",[84] literature was reaffirmed as the only useful form of revelation and value-creation in the modern world, with the act of interpretation being

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[79]I would acknowledge that this is a rather simplistic statement of the effect of Darwinism on nineteenth-century intellectual discourse, but it stands as a general comment on the transition from romanticism to post-romanticism.
[80]See: pp.23-25.
[81]Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy: With Friendship's Garland and Some Literary Essays, ed. R. H. Super (New York: The University of Michigan Press, 1965).
[82]Court, Institutionalizing English Literature, p.124.
[83]Lesley Johnson, The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p.1.
[84]Vattimo, 'Postmodern Criticism: Postmodern Critique', p.60.

left to critics rather than priests.[85]

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) has been compared to Shakespeare as a "pervasive cultural presence"[86] within Western culture for his ability to turn "a patrician detachment into a distancing critique".[87] Arnold was educated at Rugby and Balliol Colleges, before becoming a school inspector in 1851[88] (an occupation he continued for thirty-five years, contributing to his attempts to establish English as the primary element in the new national school curriculum). Initially his literary efforts were directed at poetry, although his subsequent criticism has received far greater attention. His first volume of poetry, The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems appeared in 1849 and was followed by Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems (1852), Poems: Second Series (1855), Merope: A Tragedy (1858) and New Poems (1867).[89] Later in life Arnold began to turn to literary criticism, developing an approach to literature that has led some critics to characterise him as a diagnostician of cultural decay.[90] Essays in Criticism appeared in 1865 (this was followed by a second series in 1888), followed by On the Study of Celtic Literature (1867), Culture and Anarchy (1869), Friendship's Garland (1871) and Literature and Dogma in 1873.[91] In many respects his early criticism reflected continuity with his romantic predecessors like Coleridge and Wordsworth, especially in his privileging poetry with a specific function:

> The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will

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[85]Robert Langbaum, 'The Function of Criticism Once More', in Robert Langbaum, The Modern Spirit: Essays on the Continuity of Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Literature (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p.5.
[86]Joseph Carroll, 'Matthew Arnold', in Groden and Kreisworth, eds, The Johns Hopkins Guide, p.45.
[87]Terry Eagleton, 'Sweetness and Light For All: Matthew Arnold and the Search For a Common Moral Ground to Replace Religion', The Times Literary Supplement (January 21, 2000), p.14.
[88]Drabble and Stringer, eds, The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature, p.23.
[89]ibid.
[90]Chris Baldick, Criticism and Literary Theory 1890 to the Present (London and New York: Longman, 1996), p.2.
[91]Drabble and Stringer, eds, The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature, p.23.

> find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.[92]

Unlike the romantics, however, Arnold identified poetry as the highest literary form in *cultural* rather than purely intellectual or spiritual respects. This was a singular development in the continuing discourse of cultural theory,[93] because it located poetry as part of a broader social mechanism and provided theorists with certain limitations. The employment of culture as an explanatory principle reined in suffering emotions and forced critics to locate artistic products within their historical period. In large part, the employment of culture as an ordering principle in literary criticism implied an act of historicisation:

> Culture says: "Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voices; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds . . . "[94]

Arnold's employment of "culture" as a cognitive tool led him to critique English society in direct terms. His main concern related to what he perceived to be a pervasive element of philistinism[95] amongst his contemporaries, suggestive to him of

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[92]Matthew Arnold, 'The Finer Spirit of Knowledge', in Ellmann and Feidelson, eds, The Modern Tradition, p.913 (Arnold's emphasis).
[93]See: pp.23-25.
[94]Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p.97.
[95]Matthew Arnold, 'Friendship's Garland', in Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p.6:

the classical cultural division of Hellenic and Hebraic societies.[96] For Arnold, this age-old opposition represented a dialectic that constantly moved towards the attainment of "Sweetness and Light",[97] the ultimate aim of culture:

> The pursuit of perfection, then, is the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness and light, works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the attainment of sweetness and light.[98]

The central aim of literary criticism for Arnold was therefore primarily related to a didactic and pedagogic principle. Literature provided a means by which the population could be educated in the finest thought available, and it was the critic who was best equipped to disseminate this thought. Further to this, however, was a belief that criticism itself could be raised to the status of art. In analysing literature as a cultural product, the critic was at liberty to provide a certain gloss that in itself presupposed an act of artistic licence. The logic employed by Hayden White in Metahistory (1973) provides a useful perspective to this element of Arnold's thought. The issue relates to differing levels of historical consciousness: whereas poetry reflects poetic-cultural consciousness *in itself*, criticism (or, straightforward book "reviews") poetic-cultural consciousness *for itself*, literary critique is reflective of poetic-cultural consciousness *in and for itself*:

> These three classes of historical consciousness represent different

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"if Philistinism is characteristic of the British nation just now, it must be in a special way characteristic of the representative part of the British nation, the part by which the British nation is what it is, and does all its best things, the middle-class"

[96]Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p.164:
"When the two are confronted, as they very often are confronted, it is nearly always with what I may call a rhetorical purpose; the speaker's whole design is to exalt and enthrone one of the two, and he uses the other only as a foil and to enable him the better to give effect to his purpose. Obviously, with us, it is usually Hellenism which is thus reduced to minister to the triumph of Hebraism [read Philistinism]".

[97]ibid, pp.90-114.

[98]ibid, p.112.

> stages of historical self-consciousness. The first corresponds to what might be called *mere* historical consciousness (historical consciousness *in itself*), the second to a historical consciousness which recognises itself as such (historical consciousness *for itself*), and the third to a historical consciousness which not only knows itself as such but which reflects upon both the conditions of its knowing . . . and the general conclusions about the nature of the whole historical process that can be derived from rational reflection on its various products . . . (historical consciousness *in and for itself*).[99]

As White points out, the nineteenth century was characterised in large part by a developing historical consciousness that began to develop levels of self-reflexivity commensurate with Kantian and Hegelian philosophy. In viewing poetry through the lens of "culture", Arnold was applying the precepts of transformative critique to literary analysis. A further suggestion as to the elevation of literary criticism towards critique in Matthew Arnold lies in White's assertion that Hegel himself actually conceived poetry to be a "[*m*]*etaphorical apprehension* of the world, containing within itself the potential of generating the other modes of tropological reduction and inflation . . ."[100] - surely an eloquent statement of Arnold's purpose and practice. Matthew Arnold's legacy was in large part related to his attempt to elevate criticism towards the intellectual heights attained in nineteenth-century art and philosophy.

Arnold had no illusions about the task he had set himself and other literary critics, however. Although he had bought literary criticism into line with the finest critical techniques of the period, he was well aware of the vitriol that might follow what was, in effect, the elevation of criticism into critique. The employment of "culture" as a critical tool was challenging to many of his contemporaries, who still held to Schiller's "intentional fallacy"[101] that forbade the use of cultural, biographical or historical precepts. Nevertheless, his tone remained optimistic, and he held fast to a

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[99]White, Metahistory, p.97 (White's emphasis).
[100]ibid, p.86 (White's emphasis).
[101]See: p.23.

perception of culture and literature as "custodian[s] of the moral":[102]

> So culture has a rough task to achieve in this country. Its preachers have, and are likely to have, a hard time of it, and they will much oftener be regarded for a great while to come, as elegant or spurious Jeremiahs than as friends and benefactors. That, however, will not prevent their doing in the end good service if they persevere. And, meanwhile, the mode of action they have to pursue, and the sorts of habits they must fight against, ought to make it quite clear for everyone to see, who may be willing to look at the matter attentively and dispassionately.[103]

Matthew Arnold's vision for literary criticism was not fully realised until the twentieth century, in the writing of figures like T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling. A note of caution should be added here, however, because although Arnold was often referred to by subsequent critics, they did not always subscribe to his ideas or practise the kind of criticism he espoused. Although Arnold provides the singular example of the kind of literary criticism examined in this thesis, those that followed him were often at pains to distance themselves from his critical method. The next three critics to be examined here should make explicit to the reader the variety of literary and cultural perspectives among critics. Late twentieth century New Zealand is extremely interesting in that it saw the development of a mode of criticism with a basically uniform adherence to both literary and cultural aspects. Although there was clear deviation amongst the writers in regard to theory and practice, the basic Arnoldian attention to both literary *and* cultural analysis is startling.[104] Matthew Arnold was on a mission to alter critical precepts towards cultural analysis, in order to raise both the status of the literary critic and his culture. T. S. Eliot illustrated this point well in 1920 when he suggested that Arnold "was rather a propagandist for

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[102]Eagleton, 'Sweetness and Light For All', p.15.
[103]Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p.95.
[104]See page 290 for a schematic of deviations in the literary and cultural aspects of New Zealand literary critique.

criticism than a critic . . .".[105] Like his fellow critics in New Zealand a century later, Arnold felt that the standards of criticism itself had to be raised before his nation's literature could attain to the heights of its forbears and continental rivals. Moreover, for Arnold, sophisticated literary-cultural criticism was the means by which English culture could be directed towards "sweetness and light". There has been no consensus among critics that followed him as to whether this was a laudable (or even possible) goal, however, making New Zealand's acceptance of his philosophy interesting indeed.[106]

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) indicates the departure from Arnold's thought well. Best known for his poetry,[107] Eliot was also a very well received literary critic, editing the literary periodicals The Egoist (1914-1919) and Criterion (1922-1939) and becoming a director of the publishing company Faber and Faber, where he established a formidable list of many of the twentieth century's best known poets. His critical works include The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (1920), The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933), Elizabethan Essays (1934), The Idea of a Christian Society (1940), Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (1948), Poetry and Drama (1951) and On Poetry and Poets (1957).[108] In critical terminology, Eliot can usefully be viewed as the progenitor of "modernist" discourse, reflecting a sharp division between his thought and that of Arnold. Primarily, modernism refers to the drastic reappraisal of culture that developed after the turn of the twentieth century. Technological change and increasingly virulent nationalism appeared to portend the

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[105]T. S. Eliot, 'The Perfect Critic', in T. S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p.1.

[106]W. B. Yeats also subscribed to Arnold's basic philosophy. It would appear as if the stance develops in tandem with efforts to originate a local literary *and* cultural identity and wanes when (and if) that identity solidifies. See W. B. Yeats, Uncollected Prose 1, ed. John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan, 1970), p.224: "Let it be the work of the literary societies to teach to the writers on the one hand, and to the readers on the other, that there is no nationality without literature, no literature without nationality".

[107]The Wasteland (1922), For Lancelot Andrewes (1928), Four Quartets (1935-1942), Sweeney Agonistes (1932). Note also his poetic dramas The Rock (1934), Murder In the Cathedral (1935), The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail Party (1950), The Confidential Clerk (1954) and The Elder Statesman (1959) and his book of verse for children, Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats (1939).

[108]Drabble and Stringer, eds, The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature, p.177.

end of the "Old World", ushering in a "Brave New World" of chaos and social dislocation. To T. S. Eliot, Matthew Arnold's world was a distant reminder of simpler times. In The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933) he went so far as to suggest that "Arnold represents a period of stasis; of relative and precarious stability, it is true, a brief halt in the endless march of humanity in some, or in any direction".[109] Modernist theorists could often be vehement in their repudiation of romantic philosophy,[110] but Eliot was generally balanced in his appraisal of Arnold, largely in order to place himself in the line of English literary critics that ranged from John Dryden to Samuel Johnson and (later) Arnold himself. Eliot's criticism of Arnold was pointed, however, and lay in several different areas.

Firstly, Eliot objected to Arnold's obsession with "culture". Eliot himself was not against using the term,[111] but disliked it being raised above both religion and the human subject itself. It was Eliot's intention to point out that "though he [Arnold] speaks to us of discipline, it is the discipline of culture, not the discipline of suffering".[112] This was in line with his characterisation of Arnold as "the poet and critic of a period of false stability".[113] Eliot held strong religious beliefs (specifically High Anglicanism), and refused to accept that culture was powerful enough as a force to reverse the increasing chaos of the modern era. Moreover, Eliot felt that Arnold's cloistered era made it impossible for him to truly appreciate the full range of human suffering - and therefore the potential inherent in art. In addition to focussing his analysis on culture, Eliot began to focus upon the creative act itself, because it was within this creative act that human genius was expressed.[114] In this sense, Eliot has been described as the first truly aesthetic critic, allowing a movement away from the gentlemanly man of letters.[115] Similarly, his attention to the creative act and aesthetic form has led many subsequent critics to suggest that he was a progenitor of New

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[109]T. S. Eliot, 'Matthew Arnold', in T. S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1933), p.103.
[110]Balachandra Rajan, 'T. S. Eliot', in Groden and Kreiswirth, eds, The Johns Hopkins Guide, p.223.
[111]T. S. Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948).
[112]Eliot, 'Matthew Arnold', p.103.
[113]ibid, p.105.
[114]Baldick, The Social Mission of English Criticism, pp.113-119.
[115]ibid, p.111.

Criticism[116] (along with I. A. Richards in England and followed by Alan Tate and Cleanth Brooks in America) which eschewed attention to anything except the text itself.

Despite his increasingly systematic mode of criticism, Eliot's interest in culture always remained strong. His religious convictions had simply led him to question the usurpation of religion by either culture or even poetry itself. Despite being a poet-critic[117] who wrote prose in large part to explain and justify his poetry to the wider public, Eliot did not believe that poetry (or the poet) could save western civilisation. Just as Arnoldian culture was inadequate, so was poetry in general. Eliot felt that western society could be characterised as a vacuum created through the collapse of both the church and hereditary aristocracy[118] and neither culture nor poetry could be expected to fill this vacuum. Indeed, Eliot lamented "the deplorable moral and religious effects of confusing poetry and morals in the attempt to find a substitute for religious faith".[119] This was an interesting turn of events in the post-romantic movement towards a deification of the poet-as-seer. Although Eliot held a special place for poetry in society, he would never place it above religion, and felt that Arnold's attempt to do so reflected imprecise thinking.[120] His understanding of "The Social Function of Poetry" (1945)[121] related precisely to a belief that poetry "has had no social function in the past, [and] it is not likely to have any in the future".[122] Nevertheless, his disagreement with Arnold's deification of culture did not lead him to ignore the social significance of poetry altogether:

> For our language goes on changing; our way of life changes, under the pressure of material changes in our environment in all sorts of ways; and unless we have those few men who

[116]Rajan, 'T. S. Eliot', p.223.
[117]ibid, p.222.
[118]Louis Menand, 'T. S. Eliot', in A. W. Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol.7: Modernism and the New Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.54.
[119]Eliot, The Use of Poetry, p.116.
[120]ibid, p.122.
[121]T. S. Eliot, 'The Social Function of Poetry', in T. S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1957), pp.15-25.
[122]ibid, p.15.

> combine an exceptional sensibility with an exceptional power over words, our own ability, not merely to express, but even to feel any but the crudest emotions, will degenerate.[123]

Eliot felt that poets held no great advantage in the quest for socially significant knowledge, because poets themselves had no great claim to authority (certainly not in comparison to Biblical figures - Eliot did not feel himself to be a modern day Jeremiah) and they worked from "instinct"[124] rather than logic. For Eliot, poetry needed religion, rather than Arnoldian culture.[125]

Even education was to play maidservant to religion in Eliot's critical philosophy.[126] Despite noting the close association between education and culture, and extolling its essential virtues, Eliot warned that "the instructive point is this, that the more education arrogates to itself the responsibility [to heighten the general consciousness], the more systematically will it betray culture".[127] This was a direct response to F. R. Leavis, who had been programmatically attempting to further mass education, in order to raise the consciousness of the "lower" sectors of English culture. Eliot never held so much faith in "culture" as an ordering principle of society, especially when it placed religion in an inferior position. He was more concerned at the increasing secularisation of society, which in his mind had resulted in a breakdown of traditional modes of restraint and a decline in moral certitude. Much of his criticism was more concerned with positioning himself within the traditional line of English literary critics, and justifying (and explaining) his poetic style to his audience. Pedagogy and questions of morality were to be left to the Church, sanctioned by faith rather than culture.

F. R. Leavis (1895-1978) disagreed with Eliot about the role of education in English culture. Described as employing critical criteria that were "at once consistent

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[123]ibid, p.21.
[124]Eliot, The Use of Poetry, p.129.
[125]ibid, p.137.
[126]Eliot, Notes Toward the Definition of Culture, p.107.
[127]ibid.

and infamously vague",[128] Leavis was a central figure in the development of both literary criticism and the institutionalisation of English studies as a modern discipline. Cambridge born, bred and educated, Leavis was instrumental in I. A. Richard's courses in "Practical Criticism", which were essentially the forerunners of the New Criticism that developed in America later in the century. He was appointed probationary lecturer at Downing College (1927-1931) and later lecturer at the same college (1935). He remained at Cambridge until 1964, exerting a huge influence over the Department of English as well as becoming involved in various literary circles. From 1932 to 1953 he was editor of the literary periodical Scrutiny (1932-1953), a magazine known for its dissemination of "Cambridge Criticism".

In large part, the post-romantic critics found their master in F. R. Leavis. Although not particularly esteemed during his tenure as an academic, Leavis was integral to the critical and educational development of twentieth century English Studies. His list of publications (including reviews, essays and books) is impressive and impossible to describe in full here.[129] His most significant books include Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture (1930), New Bearings in English Poetry (1932), For Continuity (1933), Culture and Environment (1933), Revaluation (1936), Education and the University (1943), The Common Pursuit (1952), D. H. Lawrence: Novelist (1955) and Two Cultures?: The Significance of C. P. Snow (1962) and The Living Principle: 'English' as a Discipline of Thought (1975). Unlike both Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot, Leavis remained first and foremost a literary critic and educational theorist. Until his death in 1978 his focus centred on recovering significant novelists and writers from critical oblivion (most notably D. H. Lawrence, who had received scant critical attention until Leavis' work) and the continual repositioning of English Studies as a central discipline within both the university and popular culture.

For Leavis, literature (rather than poetry in particular) held special importance for the development of the university and society. Unlike the "purer" post-romantic critics like Arnold and Eliot (who often wrote literary criticism as much to explain

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[128]Robin Jarvis, 'F. R. Leavis', in Groden and Kreiswirth, eds, The Johns Hopkins Guide, p.460.

[129]See: M. B. Kinch, W. Baker, J. Kimber, F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Leavis: An Annotated Bibliography (London and New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989).

their own poetry to the wider public as to heighten public awareness), Leavis appeared as a prodigious reviewer and theorist determined to advance the cause of literature within his society, both as an antidote to a newly secularised culture, as a preserver of tradition and as a practically oriented discipline within the university. Building on the criticism of T. S. Eliot, Leavis was determined to extricate literary theory from the strictures of romanticist thought, which in his opinion had led to an unhealthy and unnecessary preoccupation with creativity and genius:

> we are apt to be peculiarly under the influence of ideas and attitudes of which we are not fully conscious, they prevail until rejected, and the Romantic set - an atmosphere of the unformulated and vague - may be said to have prevailed until Mr. Eliot's criticism, co-operating with his poetry, made unconsciousness impossible and rejection inevitable.[130]

His point was that until the university and society came to view literature as a product of society (rather than an isolated product of genius), it would cease to hold utility as a socially transformative tool. More than even Arnold or Eliot, Leavis viewed literature as a redemptive force in society, but he continually asserted that this redemptive quality was undermined by too great an emphasis upon talent rather than tradition. For Leavis the literary *tradition* was the motive force behind literary production rather than genius, implying that the literary canon had become the new preserver of knowledge rather than the "spurious Jeremiahs" who had assumed this role with no other backing than their own romanticised perceptions:

> The individual writer is to be aware that his work is of the Literature [sic] to which it belongs and not merely added externally to it. A literature, that is, must be thought of as essentially something more than an accumulation of separate works: it has an organic form, or constitutes an organic order, in relation to which the individual writer has his significance and his being.[131]

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[130]F. R. Leavis, 'Literature and Society', in Leavis, The Common Pursuit, p.183.
[131]ibid, p.184.

The organic metaphor suited Leavis' purposes well (as it did many of his contemporaries, both in England, New Zealand and elsewhere) because it suggested a natural growth of stored potential within both society and the individual, rather than the triumph of individual genius. This was in direct opposition to earlier romantic critics like Wordsworth and Coleridge and asserted the need for a complete redefinition of literature in the face of modernisation and the mass market. The literary tradition was to be reappraised and the aims of literary output redefined in terms of an "evolutionary" theory of cumulative growth (note that the metaphor implies "natural" growth rather than sporadic and haphazard progression) rather than individual genius. Leavis pushed the post-romantic ideals of Arnold and Eliot to their logical conclusion, entering into the discourse of culture and the mass market, but remaining with English as the central tool of education.

In The Living Principle: 'English' as a Discipline of Thought (1975) Leavis forthrightly pointed out the challenges facing the modern university system, noting that students numbers had increased, academics were increasingly tied to administrative duties and the mass market was producing "telly- and pin-table-addicted non-students . . .".[132] To Leavis, this implied a fundamental problem in wider society that disabled the learning process and slowed the growth of intellectual advance:

> The belief I am thinking of entails the perception that the despair, or vacuous unease, characteristic of the civilized world comes of profound human needs and capacities that the civilization denies and thwarts, seeming - paralysingly - to have eliminated in its triumph all possibility of resurgence.[133]

The university lay at the centre of any possible resurgence for Leavis, but the present disciplinary divisions gave no real help to students wishing to truly advance their humanistic capacities. This was the need that English studies was to fulfil, despite the

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[132]F. R. Leavis, 'Preface' to F. R.Leavis, The Living Principle: 'English' as a Discipline of Thought (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), p.10.
[133]ibid.

difficulties:

> tests of perception and sensibility and exercises in judgment and analysis should be - and should deserve to be - thought of as fostering the kind of intelligence in the training of which a university English School that deserved to exist and be respected would see the work of its justifying discipline.[134]

All three post-romantic critics examined thus far illustrate an interesting development away from romantic notions of literary creation and tradition towards a secularised, academic and highly self-conscious attention to literature as a socially transformative and (most importantly for Leavis) practical art. In Leavis, however, the level of discourse was raised to an entirely new level in keeping with developments in other disciplines, in order to argue against what he perceived as an unhealthy reliance upon rationalist thought. His discussion of Charles Dickens' Little Dorrit (1855-1857) expressed this sentiment succinctly:

> In that work, as the challenged critique must aim at bringing out, Dickens, making a characteristically profound, and necessarily creative, inquest into society in his time, tackles in sustained and unmistakeably deliberate thought the basic unstatable that eludes the logic of Cartesian clarity - and of philosophic discourse too. Taking it as granted that life is the artist's concern, he develops in full pondering consciousness the un-Cartesian recognition that, while it is 'there' only in individual lives, it *is* there, and *its being* there makes them lives: what the word 'life' represents, and evokes, is not to be disposed of under the rubric of 'hypostatization', or collectivity, or linguistic convenience.[135]

In this statement, Leavis can be said to have distilled a point of finite self-reference

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[134]F. R. Leavis, 'Thought, Language and Objectivity', in Leavis, The Living Principle, p.19.
[135]ibid, p.43 (Leavis' emphasis).

for literary critique as a mode of writing. To put the matter more directly than Leavis was able, the mode is at once abstracted to a third mode of historical consciousness,[136] singularly focussed upon social and cultural forces and resistant to Cartesian logic. In its development out of Kantian philosophy and its attachment to literature, critique established itself in Leavis as the dominant and most sophisticated mode of literary criticism worldwide. Literary critique aims to find "the invariant conditions . . ."[137] that govern the existence of any literary product, with essentially *humanistic* rather than rationalistic cognitive tools (it is because of this that literary critique tends to represent the "transformative" rather than "institutional" aspect of critique as a concept - it is inherently imaginative and culturally oriented). This said, the opacity of Leavis' remark demands interrogation, because although insightful, it does not delineate the basic functions that literary critique fulfils. Indeed, Leavis' greatest error could perhaps be said to be the fact that he never identified literary critique as a distinct mode of writing: instead he merely adumbrated a philosophy of life and education that demanded a central place for literature. In this sense it is important to note the historical development of literary critique out of romantic and post-romantic literary theory and practice, with Leavis providing a useful (if unselfconscious) high-point in that development.

The American critic Lionel Trilling (1905-1975) represents an important movement past not only romanticists like Wordsworth and Coleridge, but also the post-romantic critics like Arnold, Eliot, and Leavis. Like Leavis, Trilling amassed a long list of publications, including The Liberal Imagination (1950), The Opposing Self (1955), Beyond Culture (1966) and Sincerity and Authenticity (1972), and was also attracted to the Arnoldian conception of the literary critic as both an interpreter and creator of culture. In his biography of Arnold, he suggested that the nineteenth century critic's fame had led in itself to frequent misrepresentation of his thought, based upon attempts to install him as a pre-eminent literary critic. Trilling attempted to undermine the myth that had developed from too great an emphasis upon his central ideas such as "Sweetness and Light" and "Culture and Anarchy", and draw attention to the inherent complexity of Arnold's thought. For Trilling, Matthew

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[136]See: pp.37-38.
[137]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, p.23.

Arnold was undoubtedly significant as a critic, but had been misinterpreted because of the inability of commentators to appreciate his organic mode of criticism that eschewed an historical, empirical method and suggested an "eternal law"[138] based upon the limitations of rationalist thought. In this sense, Trilling's appraisal of Arnold indicates remarkable continuities between the nineteenth century critic and F. R. Leavis' work.

Trilling himself had a different attitude to both Arnold and Leavis, however. Rather than posit the possibility of a non-rational world inspired by literature, he doggedly asserted that western liberalism was inherently inadequate and incapable of fulfilling its self-avowed mission. It is in this facet of his personality that he represents an important movement beyond the post-romantic critics describe here. Unlike Arnold, Eliot and Leavis, who all (to differing degrees) asserted an optimistic and programmatic system of thought that had real faith in the power of literature to renew culture into the future, Trilling made a movement back towards the inception of (transformative) literary critique in Hegel, and asserted the overwhelming power of the historical dialectic. In his years teaching at Columbia University, Trilling consistently presented western liberalism as incapable of healing the division wrought by secularisation and mass culture - purely because of the "Opposing Self" that would inevitably further the historical dialectic. In contrast to Trilling, Arnold, Eliot and Leavis all appear to have been searching for a promised land that is an historical impossibility.

In his preface to The Opposing Self (1955) Trilling invoked Hegel in order to force his point that the "terrible" principle of culture was precisely that stabilisation would never occur. Trilling moved beyond his predecessors through his recognition that artistic "alienation" was not induced by an inadequate culture, but was an implicit facet of human experience (in this sense he could perhaps be described as a proponent of philosophical scepticism). No amount of cultural redefinition could ever hope to move beyond the "dramatic relation between the modern self and the modern

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[138]Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1955), p.104.

culture . . .".[139] In short, Trilling pointed out (doggedly) that the promised land posited by his predecessors as the final goal of culture was a chimera. In Trilling, literature became evidence of human struggle and purpose, rather than a tool for the development of a cultural environment that would cherish and profit from artistic endeavour:

> The best account of the strange, bitter, dramatic relation between the modern self and the modern culture is that which Hegel gives in the fourth part of his *Philosophy of History*. Few people nowadays have a good word for Hegel, and I - who am not, I had better say, a Hegelian - have no doubt that he is in everybody's bad books for the right reasons. But if we think of Hegel not in his political aspect but simply as an observer and describer of the developing culture of our time, we cannot but recognize his power. It was he who first spoke of the "alienation" which the modern self contrives as a means for the fulfillment of its destiny, and of the pain which the self incurs because of this device of self-realization. And it was he who, speaking of the principle of culture, and of course speaking in its defense, referred to it as the *terrible* principle of culture.[140]

No passage could better move beyond the complaints of the romantic and post-romantic critics as described in this section. For Trilling, literature was evidence of the human condition, a window into the continual strivings of people to make sense of themselves and the world. Brilliantly moving back to the core of transformative critique, Trilling pointed out that even western liberalism was simply another movement of the historical dialectic. Arnold, Eliot, and Leavis had invested literature with a purpose that outstripped its means.

For Trilling, literature was not *supremely* educative, it was *merely* educative. He was especially concerned about how literature should be taught to young people at

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[139]Lionel Trilling, The Opposing Self (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1955), p.xi.
[140]ibid (Trilling's emphasis).

university, given the tendency for students to grasp ideas in a personal rather than analytical manner. Trilling was attempting to discover for himself the fine line between merely educating his students with necessary and useful knowledge, and presenting them with the "extravagant personal force of modern literature . . ."[141] that might (and in his experience often did) lead to "personal discomfort"[142] on the part of student and teacher alike. Unlike Arnold, Eliot, and Leavis, Lionel Trilling did not appear to be searching for a coterie. Indeed, he often appeared more concerned about the problem of educating students in the lessons of literature (for their own, personal benefit) without becoming entangled in their own development of Self:

> How, except with the implication of personal judgment, does one say to students that Gide is perfectly accurate in his representation of the awful boredom and slow corruption of respectable life? Then probably one rushes in to say that this doesn't of itself justify homosexuality and the desertion of one's dying wife, certainly not. But then again, having paid one's *devoirs* to morality, how does one rescue from morality Gide's essential point about the supreme rights of the individual person, and without making it merely historical, academic?[143]

His answer was relatively straightforward, and points to the vastly increased professionalisation of literary studies by the middle of the twentieth century. Although figures like Arnold, Eliot and Leavis had thrust English Studies into the university system, Trilling was only concerned to make it function as a workable tool of education:

> Eventually I had to decide that there was only one way to give the course, which was to give it without strategies and without conscious caution. It was not honorable, either to the students

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[141]Lionel Trilling, 'On the Teaching of Modern Literature', in Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966), p. 9.
[142]ibid.
[143]ibid (Trilling's emphasis).

> or to the authors, to conceal or disguise my relation to the literature, my commitment to it, my fear of it, my ambivalence toward it.[144]

In Lionel Trilling literary critique found a balanced, yet still passionate, practitioner. His main aim appears to have been to blunt the sharp edge of literary experience without rendering that experience hollow.

Trilling's balanced approach can perhaps be attributed to his interest in psychology (particularly Freudianism), which led him towards an interest in "the mental health of the artist . . .".[145] In this aspect of his personality he appeared incapable of identifying too closely with the artist: the line between himself as critic and the artist as producer was never blurred, and although he could empathise closely with the artistic sentiment he never viewed his own criticism as art:

> Nothing is so characteristic of the artist as his power of shaping his work, of subjugating his raw material, however aberrant it be from what we call normality, to the consistency of nature. It would be impossible to deny that whatever disease or mutilation the artist may suffer is an element of his production which has its effect on every part of it, but disease and mutilation are available to us all - life provides them with prodigal generosity. What marks the artist is his power to shape the material of pain we all have.[146]

Trilling's contribution to literary criticism was to professionalise the practice. His critiques developed a healthy gap between the artist and critic, and his interest in psychology ensured his self-reflexivity. Moreover, he found a middle-ground that did not seek coteries or artistic grandiosity. In direct opposition to Arnold, Eliot and Leavis (and certainly the romantic critics), Trilling emphasised the dangerously ideological aspect of art and literature, especially when harnessed to large

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[144]ibid, p.13.
[145]Lionel Trilling, 'Art and Neurosis', in Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951), p.160.
[146]ibid, p.175.

personalities and powerful ideas:

> to call ourselves the people of the idea is to flatter ourselves. We are rather the people of ideology, which is a very different thing. Ideology is not the product of thought; it is the habit or the ritual of showing respect for certain formulas to which, for various reasons having to do with emotional safety, we have very strong ties of whose meaning and consequences in actuality we have no clear understanding.[147]

Although insightful, Trilling's various interests should be seen in perspective – each of the critics examined here brought their own personal angle to their criticism. Arnold had culture, Eliot religion, Leavis education, and Trilling psychology and the failure of western liberalism. The two constants amongst all the writers were "Literature" and "Culture". This was simply because literature had come to be viewed by these writers as the central evidential tool for cultural investigations, providing what can be termed a "point of finite self-reference" for their essays. It should not be forgotten that literary critique is a highly personal mode of writing that is dependent upon both imagination *and* rational thought.

iv] Keynote: Salient Features of the Mode and a Cattlecall

Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis (especially), and Lionel Trilling can be viewed as representing archetypal models of the modern literary critic, and in the specific essays examined in this section can be viewed as the progenitors of literary critique as a mode of writing. These four figures each suggest a growing interest in investigations into contemporary states of mind, using literature as their point of finite self-reference. Apart from this facet of their forays into literary critique, however, their writing also exhibited several salient features that speaks to the legitimacy of literary critique as not only a common literary-critical practice, but a mode of writing in its own right. Note that these features rest beneath the general philosophical stance

[147]Lionel Trilling, 'The Meaning of a Literary Idea', in Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p.286.

outlined earlier in this chapter, and raised to the most conscious level in Leavis.[148]

Firstly, literature is affirmed as the highest mode of humanistic knowledge. This stemmed from the romantic impulse to exalt poets as the new Jeremiahs, in an effort to replace the Bible with a newly secularised form of cultural knowledge. Over the course of the early twentieth century, poetry remained the dominant focus of literary critique, but by Leavis' period literature in general was beginning to exert a hold. Literature implied imagination in the purest non-religious form available and was initially understood as an expression of individual talent, or "genius". T. S. Eliot should be viewed as the first critic to begin a deconstruction of this understanding, in order to point out the interdependency between talent and tradition.

The exaltation of tradition over genius is a second central feature to literary critique in its most developed, post-romantic form. Eliot and Leavis alluded to the notion that individual writers were always "standing on the shoulders of giants", and their literary products needed to be viewed in relation to the entire tradition of western literature, rather than as a discrete product of individual talent as the romanticists had supposed. The focus upon tradition in literary critique implied a fundamental problem, however, in that it is always difficult to ascribe definite genealogical ties from a single author to an entire tradition. In this sense literary critique has tended to negotiate an uneasy relationship between individuals and their tradition, setting up arguments of similarity and difference while at the same time referring to specific works or literatures in order to facilitate this dialogue. In later authors "language", or the lingua franca of a community, came to be synonymous with tradition.

Matthew Arnold developed "culture" as the central marketplace of literary production, the place where individual talent and tradition both coalesced and negotiated a settlement. Arnold was aware that religious factions could no longer claim to be in control of the mass market, and thus developed his cultural theory in order to put forward a secularised and functional replacement. Indeed, an engagement with culture is a central identifying feature of literary critique. Unlike literary criticism in the basic sense of the term, literary critiques always refer to a nation's

[148]Morse Peckham was similarily self-conscious in his writing.

literary tradition in relation to its broader culture. Individual authors are frequently cited to lay weight to the author's opinions, but the focus tends to remain on broadly cultural insights. Literature is thus used as evidence of a cultural (or social) condition.

Like the romanticists, who should be viewed as the progenitors of the mode, practitioners of literary critique also frequently refer to nature - as the inverse of culture. Nature tends to be enlisted in order to offset the urbane and intellectual tendencies of cultural theory and assert the rights of the individual over-against their nation and literary tradition. The "Man Alone" so frequently cited in New Zealand literature is a classic example of this tendency, at once asserting individual rights to self-expression and acknowledging the interdependence of this with the cultural tradition. Literary critique is thus highly self-reflexive (a marker of the third stage of historical consciousness in White), tending to set up descriptive binaries between nature and culture, the individual and tradition, in order to avoid hypostazisation and the empirical rigidity of Cartesian logic. This is the reason literary critique can quite correctly be described as opaque. Its fulsome rejection of Cartesian logic often leads to arguments that (although persuasive) hold no real degree of empirical precision. The reader is thus forced into a conversation with the mediating author and the author's tradition. It could be said that force of personality is the central binding element to their arguments.

The writing of Arnold, Eliot, Leavis, and Trilling examined here also points to the inherently moral dimension of literary critique. Although Eliot steadfastly asserted that religion could be the only true arbiter of morality, both Arnold and Leavis felt that literature provided enough moral content to educate the general population, provided (and this is a central point) it was properly interpreted. The literary critic thus became midwife to the development of morality in the secular age. The self-reflexivity of critique can be viewed as a necessary adjunct to this claim, because morality must always involve a degree not only of philosophy, but of responsible philosophy, setting in train a cycle of logic that demands self-reflexive thought. The purely judgemental aspect of normal literary criticism does not range to these extremes - it merely proffers a judgement and does not seek out and defend the source of that judgement. Although this tendency has lessened considerably over the course of the twentieth century, practitioners of literary critique tend to arrogate to

themselves the right to educate the reader in a new morality.

Belief in the educative power of literature is therefore another salient feature of literary critique as a practice. This element was raised to its heights in F. R. Leavis, but all writers who engage in the mode either implicitly or explicitly reflect a desire to educate the reader with new insights into not only writers, but their nation, culture and (in some cases) reality itself (using literature as both evidence and inspiration). Literary critique aims to connect the artist, reader, and critic in one piece of prose in order to create literary criticism that functions as an educative tool for all parties. In more practical terms, examples of literary critique tend to prescribe certain (new) ways of reading literary texts, entering into issues of tradition, morality, culture, the relationship between self and society and language. Literary critique represents an educative tool used by certain individuals who hold an obvious concern for their culture while at the same time disagreeing with several of its central features. In this sense the mode contains a degree of political as well as cultural rhetoric concerning issues of power and domination, representation and the needs of the body politic. With so much packed into one mode of writing, it almost comes as a surprise to remember that it is based wholly upon the interpretation of literature. Literary critique is a highly imaginative mode of critical activity.

The salient features of literary critique as practised by Arnold, Eliot, Leavis, and Trilling suggest a reasonably identifiable mode of writing. Literature is hailed as the highest form of knowledge; tradition is exalted over genius; there is a strong cultural focus; it is self-reflexive; engages with issues of morality; has a serious educative focus and attempts to raise criticism to the status of art.[149] When these aspects are placed beside the anti-Cartesian philosophy outlined by Leavis (a philosophy that developed out of the writing of Kant and Hegel) and expressed through the essay form it could be said that literary critique can be taxonomically identified in reasonably concrete terms. Nevertheless, a taxonomy as rigid as this does not do service to the essentially hybrid nature of the mode, and because it is taken from only four critics it does little to suggest a truly representative evidentiary sample. In other words, literary

[149]Virginia Woolf was perhaps most interested in this aspect of the mode, Trilling the least.

critique is a hybrid mode of writing that differs widely from writer to writer. As Davis and Schleifer have pointed out, literary critique does have certain genealogical and modal unities that enable it to be used as a term of reference, but the very nature of the practice undermines the utility of any strict taxonomy. Many other writers such as George Orwell, Phillip Rahv, Gertrude Stein, Wyndham Lewis, Morse Peckham, Allan Tate, and Frank Kermode have also engaged in the practice alongside their myriad other books, articles, newspaper columns and reviews (Arnold, Eliot, Leavis, and Trilling were no different) - and each has a slightly different style, a slightly different set of interests. Although enough identifiable features exist to determine that it is a distinguishable mode in its own right, its central characteristic confounds definition. This imaginative, creative aspect, is the most fascinating aspect of the mode.

In this context, it must be noted that literary critique is intimately tied to the humanist impulse to "imagine" the world and its cultural products (whatever form those products might take), and the essay form provides boundaries that are indeterminate enough to facilitate this. This "indeterminate" nature of literary critique cannot be understated (despite its inherent difficulty). The problem is related to the fact that the mode is an extension of the essay genre. For instance, Claire Obaldia goes so far as to suggest that "the one commonly accepted fact about the essay is that indeterminacy is germane to its essence" [150] (despite devoting an entire book to the topic). While New Zealand literary critique (perhaps because of the smaller scope of the literary-cultural scene and the mode's reliance upon literature as a point of finite self-reference) is much more unified in its form and content than the essays examined by Obaldia, there remains the central complicating factor of imagination, and the power that it exerts over the mode. In short, employment of the romantic imagination is a key attribute of the mode.

It therefore needs to be understood that much of the mode's indeterminacy derives from its romantic origins, the central belief (expressed as cogently as it is possible by Leavis) that true humanistic understanding transcends Cartesian logic and inhabits an imaginative zone between obscurity and genius. The line is a fine one, but it points

[150]Obaldia, The Essayistic Spirit, p.2.

directly towards what has been termed "romantic" thought:

> the imagination came to mean not merely the power of invention but, much more significantly, the power to make sense out of experience, a sense which is not immanent in the world but which the human mind brings to it. This is the proper distinction between Coleridge's actual and real. The artist, then, reveals the real.[151]

Imagination and romanticism are thus intimately linked. And yet romanticism (like literary critique) is notoriously difficult to define. Barzun suggests that it is not a movement in the ordinary sense of the word, but more a "Zeitgeist"[152] that represents "a state of consciousness exhibiting the divisions found in every age".[153] This is a significant statement to make, because it calls into question claims that romanticism was overturned with the onset of the twentieth century. Arnold, Eliot, Leavis (and even Trilling) can all be seen to have accepted the primacy of the creative imagination within cultural formations: they still held to a basically romantic perception of literature and art as worthy of humanity's study (if not adoration). Romanticism, then, simply refers to

> the revolution in the European mind against thinking in terms of static mechanism and the redirection of the mind to thinking in terms of dynamic organicism. Its values are change, imperfection, growth, diversity, the creative imagination, the unconscious.[154]

Like Barzun, Morse Peckham points out that romanticism has yet to be transcended, and perhaps never will, because in large part it is a permanent characteristic of

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[151]Morse Peckham, 'The Current Crisis in the Arts: Pop, Op and Mini', in Morse Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism: Collected Essays (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p.240.
[152]Barzun, From Dawn to Decadence, p.466.
[153]ibid.
[154]Morse Peckham, 'Towards a Theory of Romanticism', in Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism, p.14.

mind.[155] Indeed the term actually refers to two different issues. In one sense it refers to "a general and permanent characteristic of mind, art, and personality, found in all periods and in all cultures"[156] and in another it refers to "a specific historical movement in art and ideas which occurred in Europe and America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries".[157] Theorists conflate these two distinctions at their peril, and as will be seen, over the course of the late twentieth century, authors of New Zealand literary critique struggled with exactly this problem without, it must be said, coming to a satisfactory conclusion.[158]

V] The New Zealanders

i] The Accumulation of Critical Mass, 1930-1940

The literary critiques written in New Zealand between 1940 and 1983 must be regarded as key texts in New Zealand's literary-critical history. They contain the central aesthetic and critical values that constitute the New Zealand literary tradition, and (taken together) represent a mode of writing that comments upon the relationship between literature and its environment in the deepest possible terms. They are the "load bearing beams" of New Zealand literature. Indeed, this is the main significance of the essays. Putting aside the genealogical and formal characteristics of literary critique as a mode, it is possible to view them as significant purely by virtue of their contribution to the New Zealand literary aesthetic. It would be acceptable to collect them together into a single volume solely on this basis, making reference only to their contribution to New Zealand literature and the impact they exerted upon publication. The essays collected together in this thesis are historical documents of importance to New Zealand and any modal unities can quite correctly be viewed as being of secondary importance.

It is important that documents of importance are collected and examined so that they are not lost to future generations. Moreover, New Zealand's literary tradition

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[155]Peckham, 'The Current Crisis in the Arts: Pop, Op and Mini', pp.231-251.
[156]Peckham, 'Towards a Theory of Romanticism', p.3.
[157]ibid.
[158]Wystan Curnow was a notable exception.

(like its history) is necessarily short and there are precious few critical texts worthy of detailed study. When European settlement began in 1840 there was little recognisably "British" culture to speak of, and certainly no local literary tradition or cultural aesthetic that the settlers felt comfortable engaging in. Just as homes and bridges, banking systems and government services had to be created, so did a local artistic and cultural tradition. To a historian, the development of literary critique is therefore indicative of nation building. It represents the development of "the life of the mind . . .";[159] a secondary attribute of cultural growth that follows after the development of physical and governmental infrastructures. As J. C. Beaglehole pointed out in 1954, "[t]his process of intellectual growth, of mental change, in a colonial community, this creeping on of self-awareness . . ."[160] is fascinating to study. It points to the active construction of a cultural identity located around literature and the creative imagination, and highlights the way in which developed nations are constituted less by political and infrastructural aspects than their particular "mode of sensibility . . .".[161] The cultural nationalists who established literary critique in New Zealand during World War Two were interested in precisely this aspect of cultural development. They felt that New Zealanders were preoccupied with physical prowess and economic development, and wanted to prompt the growth of a national aesthetic. Literary critique provided an excellent means of facilitating such a development, because it took a nascent cultural tradition and extended its interests towards deeper questions of identity and intellectual purpose. In line with their European and American forbears, the authors of literary critique intended to make literature function as an agent of cultural redefinition. The essays examined in this thesis should therefore be viewed as historical documents of singular importance to New Zealand culture. Their emergence in New Zealand in 1940 can be regarded as the culmination of one hundred years of cultural development, and the beginning of a literary tradition of significant value. This section recounts the accumulation of critical mass during the preceding decade that foreshadowed this development.

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[159]J. C. Beaglehole, 'The New Zealand Scholar', in P. Munz, ed., The Feel of Truth: Essays in New Zealand and Pacific History (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1969), p.239.
[160]ibid.
[161]Cubitt, ed., Imagining Nations, p.3.

The nineteen thirties have long been identified as a significant decade in New Zealand's cultural and intellectual development. Rachel Barrowman goes so far as to suggest that prior to this decade, New Zealand "was virtually an intellectual vacuum . . .".[162] Such a statement is rather harsh in many ways, and it is necessary to proceed with a cautionary note. Although derivative and shallow, New Zealand's intellectual environment had witnessed steady development from the inception of settlement in 1840. By 1930 there was a well established local press that frequently reviewed books and plays; there was a tradition of local literary and theatrical production reaching back to the colonial period; a history of philosophical and free-thinking societies and pacifist movements; labour movements and movements for the emancipation of women; a progressive education and welfare system that had led to New Zealand being labeled the "social laboratory" of the world; and a small but energetic circle of writers and artists in all the main centres. Given the circumstances of settlement and the necessity for the colonists to attend to the material development of New Zealand before considering intellectual issues, progress had been steady and reasonably consistent. Moreover, as Patrick Evans has pointed out, "[t]he only way to deal with a literature that is trying to begin itself . . . is to make an account of its many beginnings, of the ways different groups or individuals have tried at different times to assert their own importance by creating ideologies in which they are central".[163] In this sense, the identification of the nineteen thirties as a seminal (and faintly heroic) period in New Zealand's intellectual and literary history is somewhat misleading. It diminishes the role of earlier movements that were also suggestive of cultural growth and privileges a small group of men with a "great leap forward", when (as will be seen) their contribution was largely antagonistic towards New Zealand society and totally derisive of their heritage. Barrowman's assertion that a balanced view of the decade is obscured by the main actors' programmatic and undisguised efforts at self-promotion is significant,[164] as is Mark William's suggestion that there is a need to recognise the importance of the period prior to 1930.[165] In considering New Zealand

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[162]Rachel Barrowman, A Popular Vision: The Arts and the Left in New Zealand, 1930-1950 (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991), p.35.
[163]Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature, p.9.
[164]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, pp.58-59.
[165]Mark Williams, 'Literary Scholarship, Criticism and Theory', in Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, p.704.

during the nineteen thirties it is necessary to remember that much that has been handed down to us from this decade was written with posterity in mind. A rationalisation of the past and a fresh start had been effected, but it is inappropriate to view the nineteen thirties as the "birthplace" of New Zealand literature.[166]

The most important contribution of the nineteen thirties to the history of literary critique in New Zealand was related to the development of a certain critical tone; a movement towards "critique" in the sense of heightened self-consciousness and an interest in culture in all its historical, economic and sociological guises. This was largely the result of a literary and cultural nationalist movement that centred around a group of writers like Frank Sargeson, Denis Glover, Allen Curnow, James Bertram, J. C. Beaglehole, and A. R. D. Fairburn, who frequently complained in Arnoldian fashion that

> The immigrants who came to New Zealand represented a fair cross section of the middle and lower classes of Victorian England, and they brought with them much of the narrowness and Philistinism that afflicted English life in the nineteenth century.[167]

Writers and artists who worked in New Zealand during the nineteen thirties were typically scathing of the broader cultural environment, despite the fact that the hardships of the economic depression had led to an expansion of literary production and prompted the development of a basic cultural infrastructure. Indeed, much of the progress made by these figures during the depression years was in opposition to their forbears, because they were consciously attempting to cut themselves off from their past and start anew.[168] From their perspective they had every reason to do so. Although there had been a mass of literary publications from the outset of settlement

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[166]Indeed, a "birthplace" is no longer sought. Literary historians tend to divide New Zealand literature into four distinct phases: the Colonial (1840-1890), the Late Colonial (1890-1935), the Provincial (1935-1955), and the Post-provincial (1955-1985).

[167]A. R. D. Fairburn, 'Literature and the Arts', in Horace Belshaw, ed., New Zealand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947), p.241.

[168]J.O.C. Phillips, 'Musings in Maoriland – Or Was There a Bulletin School in New Zealand?', Historical Studies 20:81 (1983), p.521.

in 1840, quality was questionable (with the notable exception of Katherine Mansfield) and few writers worked full-time at their craft. Moreover, the tradition represented in the 1930 anthology of verse Kowhai Gold was extremely derivative of English romantics like Coleridge and Wordsworth and totally inattentive to developing trends in modernist theory in Europe. To the writers of the thirties, New Zealand literature appeared as a hackneyed off-shoot of Victorian verse. They wanted to divorce themselves from their romantic past and move beyond writers like Quentin Pope, whose poems like "Sonnet for Elizabeth" appeared to them to be everything New Zealand literature should react against:

> Beauty has come to us from other days
> Storied and strange, in triumph and in tears,
> Cloaked in sweet quietness, clad in glory's blaze,
> Adown the viewless path of travelled years.
> Old lovers gazed upon it, felt love's sun
> Burn into brightness, saw the white steel fall
> And unremembering slept, their bodies one
> With mould and must, their names a clarion call.[169]

More recent assessments of the anthology confirm the judgements of the Phoenix writers. MacDonald P. Jackson notes that the Kowhai Gold tradition was characterised by "strained attempts at the picturesque . . ."[170] in conjunction with over-use of the dash and the ellipsis. The anthology is still criticised as containing trite, sentimental poetry that has mainly historical (rather than critical) value.

Criticism was in even worse shape prior to the nineteen thirties, the practice being dominated by amateur (or "journalistic") critics who paid scant attention to international trends and tended to deride anything modern as degraded aestheticism. Much of the thrust of the literary nationalist movement was related to a desire to raise the standards of criticism in New Zealand, bringing the practice into line with recent

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[169]Quentin Pope, 'Sonnet For Elizabeth', in Quentin Pope, ed., Kowhai Gold: An Anthology of Contemporary New Zealand Verse (London: Dent, 1930), p.94.
[170]MacDonald P. Jackson, 'Poetry: Beginnings to 1945', p.430.

European trends instigated by the likes of T. S. Eliot and (especially) F. R. Leavis. Phoenix (1932-1933) magazine was crucial in this regard. The magazine was set up by men involved with Auckland University, and it was used as a mouthpiece for their literary nationalist project, using criticism to achieve their ends:

> For I believe that one of the greatest needs of literature today is sincere and intelligent criticism: and that the present tendency to regard 'critical' work as inherently inferior to work more obviously 'creative' is wrong, and dangerous, and not too quickly to be opposed.[171]

Phoenix made a significant contribution towards the development of New Zealand literary critique. The contributors not only attempted to raise the quality of criticism in New Zealand, they attempted to make literature function as a tool for cultural redefinition:

> Therefore I welcome, not the wanton poets nor the symptoms of mischief, not the down on our lip, not the yearning and stammering, not the lady poets sharpening their razors, but in place of imported papers such as Mr. Middleton Murry's London *Adelphi* any paper of our own which is likewise devoted to quiet understanding, devoted to humour, devoted to culture, devoted to love. Our dawning manhood demands such a paper among us.[172]

As Barrowman notes, "[t]he nationalist literary movement sought to create a vigorous, independent New Zealand literature, a literature that was 'rooted in life' . . .".[173] Like the (much larger and more developed) Australian intelligensia of the

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[171]J. A. W. Bennett, 'The Necessity of Criticism', Phoenix 1:1 (March 1932), p.21.
[172]W. D'Arcy Cresswell, 'Culture and Puberty', Phoenix 1:1 (March 1932), p.5.
[173]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.56.

same period,[174] New Zealand's intellectual base was composed of a small circle of middle-class men who had the time and financial means to engage in moral and cultural issues (and the educational background to lend their pronouncements cultural force). New Zealand society simply did not possess the depth necessary for a more inclusive group that could speak to the broader strains of New Zealand society. Although certain figures often attempted to reach the broad strains of New Zealand culture, their writing and speeches appeared to fall on deaf ears. D'Arcy Cresswell, for example, intended to educate and "civilise" New Zealand through a series of eight radio broadcasts in 1933, but his tone appeared staid, derivative and oddly romantic. Despite gaining a level of approval from listeners, Modern Poetry and the Ideal was totally inattentive to the realities of life in New Zealand. In a prefatory letter to Ormond Wilson in the published version of his address he went so far as to suggest that

> *There is something fatalistic and final about the Southern Alps and the plains. It is the sort of unbending scene where dreadful idolatries thrive, such as Baal, a brazen conviction of being sufficient unto themselves, a Goliath of pride. Nice to be little David and smite them to death!*[175]

Nevertheless, the antagonistic tone struck by the literary nationalists had important implications for literary critique. Firstly, "nationalist cultural critiques ma[d]e . . . a claim for the value of literature".[176] In Arnoldian fashion, literature was lauded as a means by which New Zealand could be led away from its (apparently) stagnant, derivative and shallow culture, towards modernity and an engagement with the international culture. A necessary corollary to this was the necessity for writers and artists to adopt a public role. Writers were to take on the moral responsibility of redefining the cultural environment towards more sophisticated modes of expression.

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[174]Brian Head, 'Introduction: Intellectuals in Australian Society', in Brian Head and James Walter, eds, Intellectual Movements and Australian Society (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.27.
[175]W. D'Arcy Cresswell, preface to Modern Poetry and the Ideal (Auckland: The Griffen Press, 1934) (Cresswell's emphasis).
[176]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.58.

In the New Zealand environment, the public role of the intellectual was symbolised in the "Man Alone" who stood outside his society in implicit criticism, yet retained all the ruggedness of the frontier male. There was to be no "Sweetness and Light" for the New Zealand intellectual, who had to be tough enough to withstand the rigours of the bush as well as his society (few of the men associated with the literary nationalist movement actually fitted this model). This heightened moral sense was indicative of a movement towards the "terrible learning" of critique, and it took on a peculiarly local colouration. The literary nationalists were affronted by what they perceived to be a strong element of moral puritanism permeating New Zealand culture, that had led to a population infected by materialism, conformity and hostility towards creative expression of any kind.[177] Artists and writers felt undervalued (indeed, scorned) by their peers, and much of their anger was directed against "New Zealand Puritanism". Barrowman is undoubtedly correct in emphasising the antipathy of these men towards their culture. Their attitude represented moral outrage as well as literary nationalism. It is important to recognise that they were not only reacting to internal stimuli, however.

Like Barrowman, Stuart Murray sees a "nationalist critique of culture . . ."[178] in nineteen thirties New Zealand writing. The period was clearly one in which criticism became infused with the broader cultural interests of critique. In large part, this process was stimulated by international events such as the economic depression, the rise of fascism, and civil war in Spain. It became natural for writers to begin to critique their culture, because it appeared as if their cultures were faltering towards chaos and needed to be redirected towards more stable modes of government. Moreover, the Marxist principles of left-wing thought demanded engagement with culture and the historical dialectic. The global embrace of Hegelian and Marxist discourse inevitably thrust writers and critics into public roles, as the intelligensia leading the working class to their true destiny. As Marx noted, "literature . . . in every great modern revolution, has always given voice to the demands of the

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[177]ibid, p.45.

[178]Stuart Murray, Never a Soul at Home: New Zealand Literary Nationalism and the 1930s (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998), p.30.

proletariat . . .".[179] Writers the world over became highly politicised and charged with left-wing beliefs that entered not only their writing, but their criticism. The global culture of the nineteen thirties thus lent a certain seriousness to the Arnoldian vision. Writers and critics were no longer "Spurious Jeremiahs", they were a necessary part of the global cultural revolution. Indeed, the "Red Decade" should be viewed as crucial to the rejuvenation of transformative critique after Hegel.

In New Zealand, Marxist ideas were expressed through Tomorrow magazine, established by Kennaway Henderson and H. Winston Rhodes in Christchurch in 1934. The magazine was eventually forced to close by the Labour government in 1940 under wartime censorship regulations, but in the interim it put forward "a consistent critique of New Zealand culture . . ."[180] based around political, economic, and social commentary. Tomorrow also included book reviews and the odd piece of criticism, and provided an outlet for several aspiring New Zealand writers of short stories and poetry (most notably Frank Sargeson). Basically, however, Tomorrow was a culturally oriented magazine that viewed New Zealand society through the lens of international as well as local events. In this sense it provided a counterpoint to Phoenix (that focused on literature), challenging New Zealand culture's repressive tendencies and often harsh systems of censorship:

> I didn't go to the first Springbok match but a friend of mine did. He said the crowd was sub-human. I can quite believe it was. But let's remember it was a crowd that lives in houses with h. & c. and knows how to turn on the electric light, and rides in tramcars if not in taxis. That's a point about these days. They're a combination of frightful crudity and even more frightful refinement. But luckily BOTH are somewhat spurious.[181]

The political content of Tomorrow was unmistakeable, and despite trying to appear non-partisan in these terms, it soon came to be seen as a mouthpiece for the socialist

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[179]Karl Marx, 'The Communist Manifesto', in David McLellan, ed., Karl Marx: Selected Writings (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.243.
[180]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.35.
[181]Frank Sargeson, 'Just a Few Hot-Points', Tomorrow 3:21 (August 18 1937), p. 657.

vision. H. Winston Rhodes' influence was especially significant in this regard, because he subscribed to the Marxist understanding of artistic roles, lauding heroic novelists who championed the working class. In the increasingly politicised environment of the nineteen thirties, Tomorrow magazine stood as a symbol for radical politics and cultural critique. In combination with Phoenix it provided an infrastructural precedent for the future development of New Zealand literary critique.

The critical tone of New Zealand's small intellectual scene was markedly altered through the efforts of the literary nationalists of the nineteen thirties. Their cultural critiques began a tradition of critical activity that was to extend across late twentieth century New Zealand. Of special importance was their elevation of the artist into a public role, and their identification of criticism as a necessary adjunct to cultural redefinition. By the onset of war in 1939 a critical tone had been established that made it natural for critics to extend their writing into the cultural arena. In many ways, the literary critiques written after 1940 owed much of their form and function to the preceeding decade. It had become natural for New Zealand writers to engage with the international critical environment and examine New Zealand culture with the most sophisticated critical tools available.

Phoenix and Tomorrow did not have the scope for extended pieces of criticism, however. Most of the critiques contained in their pages ran to only a few paragraphs, and the magazines had peripheral interests that made extended discussions of New Zealand literature impossible to publish (this was especially the case with Tomorrow). There was clearly a need for a mode of writing that could engage in criticism and cultural commentary at the same time, outside the restrictions of periodical publication. While Phoenix presented the New Zealand literary community with criticism of New Zealand literature and a broader attitude of literary nationalism, it did not provide any extended critiques of New Zealand culture. Conversely, while Tomorrow provided a series of cultural critiques, it did not engage in literary criticism to any significant degree. What was required was a tradition that blended these two aspects into one mode of writing, providing criticism of New Zealand literature as well as cultural critique. This was the need that literary critique was to fulfill.

In this context it was essential that New Zealand's publishing industry be

extended. Without outlets for extended pieces of criticism it would have been impossible for literary critique to develop. Barrowman suggests that the nineteen thirties were "a cultural beginning in New Zealand publishing".[182] The decade is in many ways more significant in this regard than the development of the critical tone outlined above. Prior to the establishment of The Caxton Press by Denis Glover and John Drew in 1936,[183] New Zealand writers had few outlets for their writing, leading to a situation where local topics were avoided. Between 1936 and 1940 The Caxton Press published writing by R. A. K. Mason, D'Arcy Cresswell, Denis Glover, A. R. D. Fairburn, Leo Bensemann, J. C. Beaglehole, Allen Curnow, Charles Brasch, J. R. Hervey, Frank Sargeson, and Anton Vogt.[184] In 1940 it published M. H. Holcroft's The Deepening Stream, and in 1945 followed this up with Allen Curnow's anthology A Book of New Zealand Verse. Other presses soon came into existence as well, including over the years Unicorn, Paul's Book Arcade, and a series of cooperative publishing ventures that developed from left-wing bookstores.[185] The establishment of the literary periodical Landfall in 1947 in many ways completed a basic publishing infrastructure for New Zealand, allowing writers to extend their investigations into New Zealand literature and culture and providing the reading public with accessible and well produced writing on New Zealand topics.

The nineteen thirties contributed essential critical and infrastructural aspects to the local culture. In reality, however, the decade failed in its mission. Rather than actually altering New Zealanders attitudes and cultural norms, the writers of this generation simply proved that artistic endeavour in New Zealand was undervalued and (in some cases) actually suppressed. There was still no common consensus that New Zealand possessed a body of work that could be called a "Literature" and writing on New Zealand topics was sporadic and generally held to be inferior to work produced in Europe. There had been no extended commentaries on the New Zealand literary tradition. Nevertheless, by the onset of war in 1939 New Zealanders had become more used to reading about their nation and culture, and the government had begun to

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[182]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.3.
[183]Gordon Ogilvie, Denis Glover: His Life (Auckland: Godwit, 1999), p.90.
[184]Pat Lawlor, The Caxton Press: Some Impressions and a Bibliography (Wellington: The Beltane Book Bureau, 1951), pp.13-14.
[185]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.90.

see the value of encouraging (on their own terms) cultural redefinition. Most importantly, writers and critics had grown used to a public role, and felt a moral obligation to lead New Zealanders away from their malaise of isolation and cultural uniformity. A small but effective publishing industry had also been established, making it much easier for ideas about New Zealand to be put forward for public scrutiny. Although the nineteen thirties have often been mythologised as a radical break when they should more accurately be viewed as a continuation of earlier phases in New Zealand literature, there can be little doubt that the advances made were both necessary and sufficient for the future development of literary critique. By the time of the Centennial celebrations in 1940, New Zealand writers had decided "that "building a literature" involves something more than just writing poems and stories".[186] They decided that it involved artful criticism.

ii] Justifying the Canon

The construction and elucidation of any new literary mode presupposes a degree of editorial discretion from the outset. Not only must the texts be identified as being of reasonable significance in either historical or literary terms, they must be selected with a view to maintaining a certain integrity for the mode. Less significant texts that might otherwise fit the modal criteria must be discarded, and repetition of particular authors needs to be avoided in order to ensure a representative survey of the tradition's authors. Although the formal boundaries of the mode provide boundaries that need to be adhered to as closely as possible, it is also necessary to include in the initial canon a body of essays that speaks to its essential concerns. Once established, there is no reason why certain texts cannot be added (or, indeed, discarded), but in the initial stages of development there needs to be a degree of caution.

In this context, it is perhaps necessary to point out that subsequent alterations in specific canons is a natural and understandable process, related to changing

[186]Peter Simpson, 'All in the Family: Continuum of Discourse in Recent New Zealand Criticism', Ariel 16:4 (October 1985), p.4.

perceptions of particular texts and changing valuations of particular authors.[187] In the case of New Zealand literature this hardly seems likely given the relatively small scope of texts available, but it is possible and entirely defensible. Canon change is a normal and frequently necessary aspect of literary change, at times because of changes in cultural circumstances, at times because of changing political concerns, and sometimes because of changing interpretative procedures.[188] Herbert Lindenberger provides an excellent discussion of the different issues involved in canon formation and change, pointing out that it is simply not intellectually justifiable to assert the timelessness of any canon, whether it be related to ancient texts or the "great" philosophers studied in university undergraduate courses. Change will naturally occur in any canon that is not held as sacred for religious reasons:

> Throughout this essay I have stressed the prevalence and the persistence of change in the making of literary canons. Yet the language we use to approach those works we have canonized characteristically employs a vocabulary suggesting that some higher force has enshrined these works for all time. Literary critics – whether in their role of teachers, scholars, reviewers, or editors of anthologies and school texts – invoke words such as *immortal*, *universal*, *classic*, *timeless*, even *transcendant*, to describe the readings they prize and recommend. How can we account for this defiance of temporality on the part of intellectuals who, at some level of awareness, must surely know that they are asserting the timelessness of a text in order to question the timelessness of works that others before them have advocated?[189]

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[187]William Casement, 'Canon Revision', in William Casement, The Great Canon Controversy: The Battle of the Books in Higher Education (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996), pp. 83-122.
[188]Herbert Lindenberger, 'The Normality of Canon Change', in Herbert Lindenberger, The History in Literature: On Value, Genre, Institutions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp.142-143.
[189]ibid, pp.146-147.

This is the attitude taken in this thesis as well. To reiterate: the literary critiques contained in this thesis represent the "load bearing beams" of New Zealand literature. Although it is my assertion that these eleven essays delineate the main concerns of the mode and present a representative sample of New Zealand authors who have engaged in the practice, the hybrid nature of the mode demands flexibility. There are, after all, two means by which the canon of New Zealand literary critique could be altered. Firstly, there could be changes to the formal interpretation of what "literary critique" actually is, and secondly, a greater willingness could arise to include essays that made less impact on publication but nevertheless provide a greater level of "inclusiveness". In other words, alterations could be made for either formal or political reasons. Essentially, however, the guiding principle in selecting the texts that follow has been historical, and related to the avoidance of anachronism. It was felt important not to let the formal constituents of literary critique as a mode outweigh the historical significance of certain texts. The final editorial decisions have therefore been based on how each text functioned at the time it was written. In the final analysis, if it was intended to fulfil both a literary and a cultural function, and was received as such by its readers at the time of publication, it has been included. The indeterminate nature of the mode and proper historical method demand such a methodology.

Given the nature of the project, it should be obvious that there are other authors that could also have been included in the study. The selection has been made in order to delineate the main concerns of literary critique as a mode, without unnecessary repetition of key ideas, and without moving outside the main formal constituents of literary critique as a mode. It should be noted at this juncture, however, that literary critique has not been a particularly common mode of writing in New Zealand literature, and those essays included in the study can safely be regarded as the central texts to the tradition. Whether implicitly or explicitly, all the essays comment upon the relationship of literary endeavour to the cultural environment, and are widely recognised as dominant texts in New Zealand's literary-critical tradition.

The thesis aims to delineate the mode and point to certain key examples of the tradition. It does not aim to construct an exclusive canon. In line with this, a word needs to be said on the end date for the thesis: 1983. Space was a determining factor, but it was also felt that 1983 marks a significant point in New Zealand literature and

history. Not only does it mark the end of an era in New Zealand politics (and, arguably, society), but the advent of the And group signalled a distinct rupture in New Zealand literature. And signalled that New Zealand literature was opening up to the global postmodern culture, and in its post-structural critiques of New Zealand literature and criticism it declared a new beginning. This influential school of writers and critics deconstructed the previous fifty years of New Zealand critical activity and suggested to this writer that provincialism was coming to an end. Surely, however (and this is a central argument of the thesis), literary critiques will continue to be written in New Zealand and any history must attend to those essays that have become *historical*; essays that have stood the test of time. The mode is nevertheless open-ended. The aim of the thesis is to delineate a certain tradition, not to develop a hegemonic canon that has its basis in exclusivity. "New Zealand literary critique" now has a genealogy, formal characteristics and a basic canon. History will dictate how these aspects of the tradition are applied.

Part Two: The New Zealanders

Chapter Two: 'A Critical Triumvirate: The Development of New Zealand Literary Critique 1940-1945'

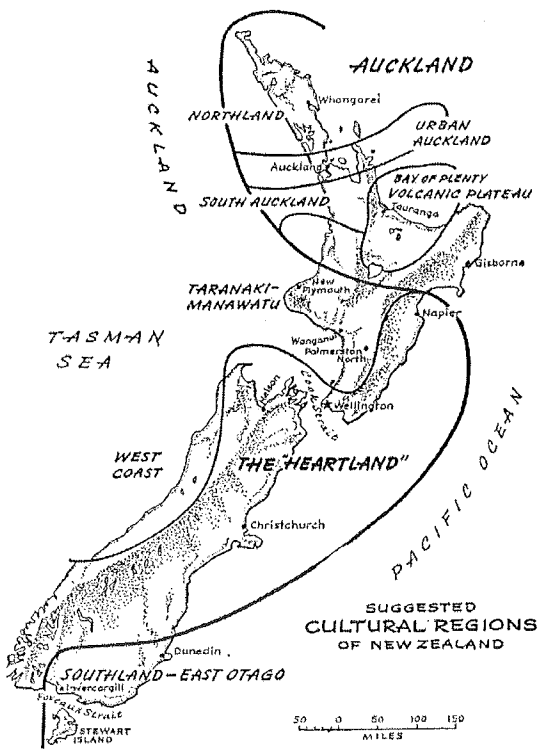

Figure 2

"Suggested Cultural Regions of New Zealand"

W. H. Oliver has noted that "[t]he way had been prepared earlier, but the breakthrough came with the end of the Second World War".[1] World War Two accelerated processes that had long been present in New Zealand society but had failed to take on a truly local flavour under the wing of British imperialism. Population growth, urbanisation, and a slow re-orientation of the economy towards global rather than imperial dictates precipitated a shift in the social pattern towards a more complex array of social and cultural interaction. James Belich goes so far as to suggest that the war placed New Zealand's "cultural and geopolitical insulation . . . under threat"[2] by immersing the nation in broader global concerns. It was natural in the context of such rapid change that new forms of creative expression would arise, to

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[1]W. H. Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination, 1940-1980', in Rice, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand, p.539.

[2]James Belich, Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders From the 1880s to the Year 2000 (Auckland: The Penguin Press, 2001), pp.287-288.

make sense of corresponding alterations in conceptions of national and cultural identity. Its emergence in New Zealand during World War Two represented the development of trends instigated by the writers of the nineteen thirties, reinvigorated by the effect of world events on New Zealand. Literary critique developed as a means to celebrate the past and examine the imperatives of life in a young and developing nation. Interestingly, it developed behind the curtain of World War Two – a brief hiatus for three writers who did not go to war, but used the time instead to redefine the terms of cultural debate in their nation.

World War Two's effect on literary publication in general is important to note. Not only did many writers (such as Denis Glover and Kendrick Smithyman) enter the armed services and therefore curtail their literary activities, but opportunities for literary publication became severely limited, especially in the all-important London market. The war blunted creative production in London by turning people's attention towards the spectacle of war.[3] The same can be said of the New Zealand literary scene, where the production of literature declined markedly. This was exacerbated by wartime restrictions on paper use in both Britain and New Zealand that restricted publishing opportunities. Those writers left in New Zealand became aware of their dependence on the London market and began to look to local possibilities in publishing. Moreover, the New Zealand wartime government of Peter Fraser was widely held to be authoritarian and (perhaps unnecessarily) harsh towards dissent of any kind, naturally antagonising many writers left at home who felt it necessary to criticise the war effort.[4] Criticism of the war was more than balanced, however, by a development of New Zealand's masculine mythology that had been forcefully portrayed by John Mulgan in Man Alone (1939). War was a means by which the rugged image of the New Zealand male could find expression, and it prompted a significant body of literature after the soldiers returned.[5] It was in this environment that literary critique evolved in New Zealand, largely as a means by which stock could be taken of the current status of New Zealand literature, but partially as a means

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[3]Robert Hewison, Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-1945 (Devon: Readers Union, 1977), p.27.
[4]Belich, Paradise Reforged, pp.294-295.
[5]Jock Phillips, A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), pp.198-212.

by which publication could continue and New Zealand's cultural identity be examined. As Belich and Phillips suggest, World War Two not only extended New Zealand's involvement in the wider world, it prompted internal criticism and the further development of ingrained cultural traits. In this manner the war provided a fertile ground for a redefinition of New Zealand's cultural identity. Three essays in particular can be seen as seminal in the creation of a new mode of critical writing that was to attend to each of these facets of New Zealand culture and society; E. H. McCormick's Letters and Art in New Zealand (1940),[6] M. H. Holcroft's The Deepening Stream: Cultural Influences in New Zealand (1940)[7] and Allen Curnow's A Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923-1945 (1945).[8]

i] E. H. McCormick, Letters and Art in New Zealand, 1940.

Eric Hall McCormick (1906-1995) and his 1940 publication, Letters and Art in New Zealand, are of special importance to the development of literary critique in New Zealand. In establishing both a critical framework and a basic canon for the study of New Zealand literature, McCormick provided a base from which future examinations of culture and literary identity could be initiated. Letters and Art in New Zealand had an inherently educative focus, in that it attempted to teach New Zealanders that they had a body of literary texts that could, indeed, be understood to constitute an independent literature. Although not particularly self-reflexive, and not overtly oriented towards cultural theory, Letters and Art was very attentive to the notion of a literary tradition in New Zealand and implicitly subscribed to the belief that literature was a central aspect of New Zealand's dawning national identity. There was a dominant tone throughout the essay that a sense of New Zealand's literary heritage could help to define a cultural identity for New Zealanders. Along with M. H. Holcroft and Allen Curnow, McCormick was instrumental in the development of a New Zealand literary and cultural aesthetic, and has quite rightly been described as a

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[6]E.H. McCormick, Letters and Art in New Zealand (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940).
[7]M. H. Holcroft, The Deepening Stream: Cultural Influences in New Zealand (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1940).
[8]Allen Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945 (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1945).

"brilliant critic".[9]

After growing up in Taihape and attending Wellington High School on scholarship, Eric McCormick trained as a teacher and took a job at a school near Nelson.[10] By 1929 he had gained an M.A. in English and Latin at Victoria University College through extra-mural studies.[11] The following year he was awarded a travelling scholarship to Cambridge on the basis of his M.A. thesis "Literature in New Zealand".[12] On arriving at Cambridge in 1931 he undertook research on a Tudor book (A Myrrour for Magistrates) under the supervision of Enid Welsford, but eventually abandoned the thesis on the advice of F. R. Leavis who along with his wife Queenie became "chief friends and unofficial mentors"[13] to McCormick during his stay. On approaching Leavis at one of his weekly tea parties for students, McCormick was advised to return to New Zealand and complete his honours thesis on New Zealand literature, taking an "anthropological"[14] approach that would account for cultural and historical forces. For the following two years McCormick attended lectures at Cambridge in English literature and returned to study on his earlier thesis, titling it "Literature in New Zealand: An Essay in Cultural Criticism".[15] His purpose became at once literary, historical and social, because he had found that it was "most convenient to select certain of the more significant works or groups of works belonging to each of the well defined stages of New Zealand's history and to consider them in connection with the relevant facts of the country's history and social development".[16] From the outset of his career as a scholar, McCormick was interested in relating New Zealand's

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[9]Belich, Paradise Reforged, p.337.
[10]Dennis McEldowney, 'Sole Charge', in Dennis McEldowney, ed., An Absurd Ambition: Autobiographical Writings (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996), p.71.
[11]E. H. McCormick, The Inland Eye: A Sketch in Visual Autobiography (Auckland: Auckland Gallery Associates, 1959).
[12]E. H. McCormick, 'Literature in New Zealand' (M. A. Thesis, Victoria University College, Wellington, 1929).
[13]E. H. McCormick, 'In the 1930's: Cambridge to New Zealand', in Ian MacKillop and Richard Storer, eds, F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), p.232.
[14]McCormick, 'Cambridge to New Zealand', p.231.
[15]E. H. McCormick, 'Literature in New Zealand: An Essay in Cultural Criticism' (M. Litt. Thesis, Cambridge University, 1935).
[16]McCormick, 'Literature in New Zealand: An Essay in Cultural Criticism', p.1.

literary heritage to broader patterns of social and historical development.

Feeling that he had absorbed all that England could offer him, McCormick returned to New Zealand before work on his Cambridge thesis was completed, settling in Dunedin and working at the Dunedin Public Library before becoming Hocken Librarian in 1936 and assistant to the Dominion Archivist in Wellington the following year. In 1937 he was also made secretary to the National Centennial Historical Committee, which was to oversee the historical elements in the upcoming centennial celebrations planned for 1940.[17] It was in this capacity that he extended his Cambridge M.Litt. thesis into Letters and Art in New Zealand.

A centennial branch of the Department of Internal Affairs had been established in 1936 to oversee all the planned celebrations for 1940, from an exhibition in Wellington to essay competitions and government sponsored architecture by Edmund Anscombe.[18] This was to be the first major foray of a New Zealand government into (state) patronage of the arts, and a great deal of planning went into the event. The Centennial Exhibition in Wellington attracted 2,641,031 visitors over a twelve month period (1 million more than the entire population at the time).[19] To some commentators it appeared as if a measure of balance had been lost amidst the national reverie:

> In the year of centennial splendours
> There were fireworks and decorated cars
> And pungas drooping from the verandas
>
> - But no one remembered our failures.

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[17]Ewan Johnston, Representing the Pacific at International Exhibitions 1851-1940 (Ph. D. Thesis, Auckland University, 1999), p.322:
At this particular exhibition ". . . New Zealand was presented to itself as a progressive and modern nation, while simultaneously re-emphasising its colonial ties with Britain".
[18]Hamish Keith, A Lovely Day Tomorrow: New Zealand in the 1940s (Auckland: Random Century, 1991), p.62.
[19]ibid.

The politicians like bubbles from a marsh
Rose to the platform, hanging in every place
Their comfortable platitudes like plush

-Without one word of our failures.[20]

In line with other elements of the centennial, the literary celebrations were politically inspired. The initial idea for a series of works celebrating New Zealand's intellectual heritage was conceived by J. W. A. Heenan, Under-Secretary of Internal Affairs in the Labour government. Heenan approached Eric McCormick in his capacity as Secretary to the National Centennial Historical Committee over the possibility of editing the entire series, which was to have a much broader base than literature alone. In order to convey the wide range of intellectual interests in New Zealand the series included works on discovery (J. C. Beaglehole), exploration (W. G. McClymont), settlement (J. Cowan), farming (G. T. Alley), administration (L. C. Webb), social services (W. B. Sutch), external relations (F. L. W. Wood), education (C. W. Beeby), science (S. H. Jenkinson), women (Helen Simpson), art, literature and language (E. H. McCormick), Maori (A. Ngata) and Pakeha (O. Duff).[21] Several of the works were never completed, or changed in scope prior to publication. Apirana Ngata's work on Maori was never completed and W. B. Sutch's work on social services was not accepted by the Prime Minister Peter Fraser.[22] It has been pointed out that Fraser was opposed to Sutch's left wing views and that his refusal of the manuscript was part of a general repression of the left within the Labour party.[23] Although the centennial was designed to celebrate the nation's cultural heritage, it was to be along acceptable party lines.[24] Acts of parliament created in the war-time atmosphere gave the government ample scope to manipulate proceedings, especially

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[20]Denis Glover, 'Centennial', in Denis Glover, Denis Glover: Selected Poems, ed. Bill Manhire (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995), p.37.
[21]Anthony James Booker, The Centennial Surveys of New Zealand, 1936-41 (B. A. (Hons) Research Exercise, Massey University, 1983), p.27.
[22]M. K. P. Sorrenson, 'The Making of Letters and Art in New Zealand', in James Ross et al., eds, Writing a New Country: a collection of essays presented to E. H. McCormick in his 88th year (Auckland, 1993), p.68.
[23]Keith Sinclair, Walter Nash (Dunedin: Auckland University Press / Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.208-209.
[24]ibid.

under the Censorship and Publicity Emergency Regulations (1939) and the Public Safety Emergency Regulations (1940).

Letters and Art has been described as "a work of such discrimination and scholarship as at once to establish the author as the first of his countrymen entitled to be called a critic . . .".[25] A testament to this praise lies in the fact that, once reformulated in 1959 as New Zealand Literature: A Survey, the work remained the only full length critical study of New Zealand literature until the appearance of Patrick Evans' The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature in 1990[26] (The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English appeared the following year[27]). This noted, it would be misleading to suggest that Eric McCormick held sole responsibility for the finished product. Despite his undoubted influence as general editor, the centennial series was essentially a government initiative, and it is important to reiterate that it was to be undertaken by committee. McCormick was required at the very least to ensure that the series would "be national in scope; authoritative, yet suitable for the general public; moderate in length - some 30,000 words; and uniform in design".[28] Letters and Art was created out of pressures at home as well as abroad.[29]

An important implication of government patronage for Letters and Art is related to

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[25]Keith Sinclair, A History of New Zealand (Auckland: Penguin, 1988), p.278.
[26]Evans, The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature.
[27]Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English.
[28]Sorrenson, 'The Making of Letters and Art', p.68.
[29]An instructive example of the effect of direct government patronage on Letters and Art in New Zealand lies in the inclusion of art as a topic at all. In order to fulfill the requirements for as broad a treatment of New Zealand creative expression as possible, McCormick was encouraged by fellow board member Oliver Duff to include art in his discussion of literature. McCormick noted in his preface that "the sections on art may best be regarded as pendants to the larger literary undertaking" (p.vii). In retrospect he suggested that at the time his critical faculties were far from fully developed in the purely artistic sense, and that the imperatives of the series took precedence over any issues of scholastic unsuitability. This was despite having been lectured at Cambridge by Mansfield Forbes who had a considerable grasp of the visual arts. Donal Smith suggests that Forbes was instrumental in McCormick's later interest in the visual arts, but there is no doubt that the subject was peripheral to his interests in writing the centennial volume. In his reformulation of Letters and Art in 1959 McCormick omitted the sections on art completely.

the concept of "Literature as an Institution".[30] The American scholar Harry Levin traces the conception of literature as an institution of society back to Hippolyte Taine in the nineteenth century. The assumption is that "[l]iterature is the expression of society, as speech is the expression of man" (Vicomte de Bonald, 1817).[31] Following this logic it is natural to assume that specific examples of literature will be related to specific institutions of society, such as the government itself, the university, the church or publishing house. As each institution necessarily holds certain powers and interests specific to itself, the argument follows that the literary work itself is open to coercion and alteration from above. This was clearly the case with both the form (volume ten in a series) and content (literature *and* art) of Letters and Art. Stuart Murray has likewise noted that Letters and Art had "explicit origins in the governmental policy surrounding the Centennial".[32] More pointedly in the context of Letters and Art, however, were not these politically coercive aspects of institutionalisation, but what could be termed "canonical" aspects. By this it is meant that state patronage of Letters and Art ensured to a reasonable degree that the work would be accepted as a cornerstone to the nation's literary historical canon. This was, of course, the intended function of the work. Poor quality scholarship could easily have negated this element of publication, but the evidence indicates a startling level of acceptance of the work from the outset.[33] In terms of literature as an institution, Letters and Art is a classic example of state inspired literary nationalism.[34]

The reasons for such overt patronage are not surprising. As McCormick noted, at the time of publication critical writing on New Zealand literature was "small in bulk and almost invariably poor in quality".[35] Various works of limited scope such as E. M. Smith's A History of New Zealand Fiction (1939) were present by the time Letters and Art was published, but there had been no systematic study of literature in its entirety outside of McCormick's own works. The same inherent shallowness could

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[30]H. L. Levin, 'Literature as an Institution', in Lionel Trilling, ed., Literary Criticism: An Introductory Reader (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1970), pp.406-418.
[31]ibid, p.406.
[32]Murray, Never a Soul at Home, p.26.
[33]Sorrenson, 'The Making of Letters and Art', p.58.
[34]Murray, Never a Soul at Home, pp.20-47.
[35]McCormick, Letters and Art in New Zealand, p.199.

be said of the other areas of study outlined for the series. Government patronage of the Centennial Surveys aimed at reversing this trend by establishing a corpus of quality local scholarship that could harness and enhance a sense of cultural identity.[36] In this sense too, the subsequent development of literary critique was inherently a government initiative. Government patronage of the Centennial Celebrations injected much needed capital into the local intellectual and cultural scenes, providing institutional support for the nascent trends that had been developing since 1932. Private initiatives could simply not provide the financial backing necessary to undertake a major appraisal of New Zealand's intellectual past as well as prompting further growth on a significant scale. It is significant, however, that Heenan and the Labour government saw the political and cultural gains to be made from such an exercise. Previous private initiatives such as Phoenix, Tomorrow and the Caxton Press had proved to them the utility of cultural (rather than merely economic and social) development.

Letters and Art in New Zealand was also influenced in its form by overseas trends.[37] Specifically, the work reflected a developing conception of literary criticism related to F. R. and Q. D. Leavis in England. Modern literary critics still regard the Leavisite movement as being integral to the development of literary criticism into a practically oriented critique of society during the early twentieth century.[38] Rachel Barrowman points out the importance of Leavisite ideology to the magazine Tomorrow that was published in Christchurch from 1934 until its forced closure by the Labour government in 1940. Works such as Q. D. Leavis' Fiction and the Reading Public (1932) and F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson's Culture and Environment (1933) were integral to Tomorrow magazine's critique of New Zealand culture (the

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[36]Sinclair, Walter Nash, p.209.

[37]There is an interesting parallel between English and New Zealand attitudes towards the origins of their literary-critical tradition. At various times both nations have struggled with the "derivative" nature of their theory and practice. See George Watson, The Literary Critics (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962), p.16:
". . . English criticism has been called derivative and unoriginal. Source-studies have made us conscious of Dryden's debt to Hobbes and Corneille, Coleridge's to the Germans, Arnold's to Sainte-Beuve, Eliot's to Remy de Gourmont, and so on. These are moments when one feels as if every major English critic has some Continental skeleton in his cupboard".

[38]Baldick, The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932, pp.162-195.

first of their kind). Specifically, Leavisite ideology pointed out "the standardisation and debasement of popular culture",[39] suggesting that a world-wide crisis of culture was impending because of the advent of mass cultural forms symbolised in Hollywood films and American comics. New Zealand literary nationalists integrated such thoughts into critiques of New Zealand culture that pointed out the prevalence of materialism, conformity and stagnation. Tomorrow's closure by Labour in 1940 as a possibly subversive publication points out the power Leavisite ideology could lend to cultural critique.

The relationship of the Leavises to McCormick and Letters and Art was more oblique than was the case with Tomorrow, however. Although F. R. Leavis did lend advice to McCormick, he was never an official supervisor. This role was taken by the historian of ideas Basil Willey (author of the well known Seventeenth-Century Background), who basically left the young scholar to his own devices.[40] McCormick did attend Leavis' lectures on English literature and initially took his advice regarding the need for an "anthropological" approach to his thesis, but as Donal Smith points out he felt that Leavis was after disciples, and was not ready to jump on the bandwagon.[41] More important in the context of Letters and Art was the fact that McCormick attended Cambridge during "The Golden Age of Cambridge English" (1928-1936)[42] when lecturers like Leavis, I. A. Richards, and Mansfield Forbes began to integrate philosophical and psychological insights into literary criticism. This was the period in which "English Studies" was institutionalised as an academic discipline[43] and the Arnoldian conception of "Culture" came to hold real prominence as an interpretative tool.[44] The literary nationalism that evolved in New Zealand around Phoenix during McCormick's absence was likewise connected to this conflation of literature with national and cultural identity.[45]

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[39]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.50.
[40]McCormick, 'Cambridge', p.233.
[41]Donal Smith, 'Eric McCormick's Cambridge', in Ross et al., eds, Writing a New Country, p.46.
[42]ibid, p.38.
[43]Baldick, Criticism and Literary Theory 1890 to the Present, p.1.
[44]ibid, p.17.
[45]Williams, 'Literary Scholarship', p.705.

McCormick's central thesis for Letters and Art drew more on a generalised notion of literary cultural adaptation to a given environment than to the specifics of Leavisite ideology. In line with his general thesis for the series, McCormick's chief aim was to make explicit the relation between social changes in the years since European discovery, and the creation of a local body of creative expression.[46] In a letter accompanying a draft sent to Heenan, McCormick wrote that he had looked at all kinds of writing, "irrespective of its nature and sometimes irrespective of its quality . . ."[47] so long as it had some bearing on what he termed the social development of New Zealand. The thematic link between all of this material was to be a thesis of adaptation:

> Now the 'idea' which seems to me of fundamental importance in any consideration of New Zealand history is this; that one hundred years ago a sample of nineteenth century society and civilisation was transferred to New Zealand and has since been reshaped and adapted, with varying degrees of success, to conform to the conditions of a new environment . . .[48]

Although McCormick had difficulty with the specifics of Leavisite ideology, he basically accepted the organicist principles[49] upon which it was based, because it provided a framework for discussion of New Zealand's relationship to its "parent" culture. For McCormick and his contemporaries such a thesis was quite natural, because it drew heavily upon organicist principles associated with British modernism and (especially) Leavisite theory which lamented the passing of traditional village culture amidst an emerging mass civilisation.[50] The colonies were viewed as an

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[46]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.vii.
[47]E. H. McCormick, cited in, Sorrenson, 'The Making of Letters and Art', p.69.
[48]E. H. McCormick, cited in, Booker, Centennial Surveys, p.120.
[49]M. H. Abram, A Glossary of Literary Terms (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p.67:
Abram describes the 'organicist' principle in literature in terms of "a growing plant which evolves, by an internal energy, into the organic unity which constitutes its achieved form".
[50]Williams, 'Literary Scholarship', p.709.

outgrowth of a British trunk.[51] This noted, organicist principles were never wholly accepted in New Zealand because they "could only trace their cultural past continuously back in time by reinforcing the colonial heritage".[52] The sense of a distinctive New Zealand identity could be lost in attempting to provide continuity to an increasingly redundant British tradition. In some way it was necessary to come to terms with both the British tradition and the indigenous past of New Zealand that it overlaid (and obscured). This was the task undertaken by McCormick in chapter one of Letters and Art, "Before the Colonists".

The anthropological strain in this first chapter is unmistakeable. Although it could be traced to Leavis' influence, it is more properly attributed to scholars like Malinowski, whose theories of functional anthropology had been assimilated into literary theory by Leavis, Richards, and Forbes. McCormick's first chapter was largely a result of work on early New Zealand by S. Percy Smith, Eldson Best, Peter Buck, and Raymond Firth (a student of Malinowski),[53] who had all spent time studying Maori history and tradition. The attempt to assimilate Pakeha to an organicist trunk independent of Britain was clear:

> In a country still raw from pioneering it reassures him [the aspiring writer] to think that there stretch behind him, not a meagre hundred years, but centuries during which a gifted people composed poems and speeches, recited their ancient traditions and genealogies, invented their folk-tales, and expressed themselves in varied forms of art.[54]

McCormick did not engage directly with anthropology, instead relating the story of New Zealand's pre-colonial beginnings through the eyes of early European explorers who recorded their impressions in amateur ethnography, personal reminisces and art. His contribution in this sense lay in a re-interpretation of these early European visions

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[51]Mark Williams, 'Repetitious Beginnings: New Zealand Literary History in the Late 1980s', New Zealand Journal of Literature 7 (1989), p.80.
[52]Williams, 'Literary Scholarship', p.709.
[53]Sorrenson, 'Making of Letters and Art', p.61.
[54]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.1.

of New Zealand to show the biases and assumptions that distorted their view of Maori - he enlisted modern anthropology in the interests of literary interpretation rather than first order cultural investigation. After early representations of Maori in terms of the noble savage conceit, nineteenth century figures such as Samuel Marsden and Augustus Earle were held up by McCormick as examples of writers who at least attempted to properly represent Maori and their cultural environment, despite failures of perspective peculiar to nineteenth century Britain.[55] The chapter fitted well with McCormick's general thesis of adaptation to New Zealand, of language struggling to assimilate to its new environment, of language slowly finding ways to say what needs to be said.

In a very short second chapter, McCormick suggested that, Maori traditions aside, the beginnings of New Zealand literature lay in the British tradition that came out with the first colonists' book collections.[56] In one sense this was a positive organicist statement that simply made explicit the British legacy conferred through colonisation, but later theorists have taken McCormick to task for failing to acknowledge the implications of such an overt transference of methodological and ideological principles. Nick Perry made an insightful point regarding McCormick's cultural assumptions when he noted that despite his enlistment of organicist principles to explain the various contingencies associated with colonisation, he could never bring himself to say that "[*c*]*ultures are made*".[57] This is the reason that Letters and Art was particularly susceptible to criticism during the nineteen-eighties, when post-colonial theory asserted the need for cognisance of New Zealand culture as an "invention" that was more programmatic than organic.[58]

Organicism does have its interpretative value, however. McCormick's third chapter, "Seminal Years" represents a case in point. Recounting the nature of letters and art during the early years of settlement, McCormick balanced the paucity of

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[55]ibid, p. 14.
[56]ibid, pp.17-18.
[57]Nick Perry, The Dominion of Signs: Television, Advertising and Other New Zealand Fictions (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994), p.113 (Perry's emphasis).
[58]Roger Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', And/1 (1983).

artistically inclined immigrants against the romanticism[59] of the few who did produce pamphlets, books, diaries and water-colours. Much of the chapter was based around art as an exemplification of the romantic impulse prevalent in all forms of creative expression during the period, an impulse perhaps best exemplified in Richard Taylor's Te Ika a Maui (1855), which attributed Maori to the Lost Tribes of Israel.[60] McCormick grappled with the reasons why New Zealand produced a Taylor and not a Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson or Thoreau,[61] implying that the issue was one of acclimatisation.[62] By this he meant that meaningful artistic vision is predicated upon an ability to "see" correctly, an ability only developed through acclimatisation over time. In McCormick's mind, the historical circumstances of settlement simply did not allow for the appearance of literary or artistic genius. Six small settlements and a few thousand immigrants of a quality far below that envisaged by Wakefield should not have been expected to produce a thinker to rival those of the older nations like Britain, France and America:

> The dreams dissolve, and we are left with - what? Nothing remotely comparable with the flowering of New England, it is true, but with an assortment of books, a large collection of sketches, and a vast miscellany of prose and verse that are not discreditable to our ancestors - given the circumstances.[63]

Organicism not only neatly characterised the outgrowth of New Zealand from Britain, but it appeared to create a certain tone of patience in some cultural commentators. The implication was that success would arrive eventually, if care was taken during the

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[59]Drabble and Stringer, eds, The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature, p.483:
"Romanticism (the Romantic Movement), a literary movement, and profound shift in sensibility, which took place in Britain and throughout Europe roughly between 1770 and 1848 . . . . Emotionally it expressed an extreme assertion of the self and the value of individual experience (the 'egotistical sublime'), together with the sense of the infinite and the transcendental".
[60]McCormick, Letters and Art, pp.44-45.
[61]ibid, p.25.
[62]ibid, p.41.
[63]ibid, p.25.

initial stages of selection and criticism. McCormick's admiration for figures such as Edward Shortland, whose Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders (1854) "anticipated the methods and many of the conclusions of modern anthropology",[64] and Sir George Grey, whose Mythology and Traditions of the New Zealanders (1854) drew attention to a cogent philosophy within Maori tradition was well founded.[65] In "Seminal Years" he highlighted the appearance of Arthur S. Thomson's The Story of New Zealand: Past and Present - Savage and Civilized (1859), and bestowed upon him the worthy accolade of " . . . New Zealand's first historian . . .".[66] The versifier John Barr also gained praise from McCormick, who found his use of vernacular language convincing in its portrayal of a "microcosm of Scottish society . . .".[67]

In all regards, McCormick valued creative expression that suggested fidelity to his (organically oriented) historical narrative, whether his subject was Maori or European. A disruption of that narrative was signalled in the initial lines of chapter four of Letters and Art, with the appearance of Samuel Butler in Canterbury in January 1860.[68] As the chapter title would suggest, "Opening Up" recounted the period of expansion experienced in New Zealand from the eighteen-sixties, when gold rushes, increased immigration and international trade buoyed both New Zealand's pastoral economy and future prospects. McCormick's use of Butler as a symbol of these advances was instructive. Not only was Butler a well known and highly regarded member of the British literary elite, but his book A First Year in Canterbury Settlement (1863)[69] was the progenitor of several similar books like J. E. Aymler's Distant Homes or the Graham Family in New Zealand (1862)[70] and the better known Lady Barker's Station Life in New Zealand (1870) and Station Amusements in New Zealand (1873).[71] The era was labelled the "emigrant-pioneer"[72] period by McCormick, a style reflected in novels like George Chamier's Philosopher Dick

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[64]ibid, p.44.
[65]ibid, p.45.
[66]ibid, p.50.
[67]ibid, p.56.
[68]ibid, p.59.
[69]ibid.
[70]ibid, p.63.
[71]ibid, p.64.
[72]ibid, p.69.

(1891).[73] The period was dominated by stock Victorian characters, and moral issues such as greed, jealousy and revenge. Revealingly, McCormick's period of economic and pastoral expansion was based around the development of a local gentry not dissimilar to the one he later suggested should be at the core of a future New Zealand monarchy. In a 1960 lecture at Auckland University McCormick championed a move from gentility "to that state of democratic aristocracy which flourished here for centuries".[74] His belief was that monarchy represented a point of common interest between Maori and European that could be harnessed in a modern form of monarchical government. Memoirs, novels and diaries of the European side of this nascent aristocracy were considered by McCormick to constitute the bulk of nineteenth century New Zealand literature, as far as it existed at the time.

Whether guided by his personal beliefs or not, McCormick related what he perceived to be an increase in assimilation of New Zealand settlers to their environment as the late nineteenth century "opened up" the colony to international flows of people and capital. The appearance of Samuel Butler and a nascent local gentry were used as illustrations of this process. An underlying tension remained for McCormick, however, because just as his narrative solidified European legitimacy in New Zealand it was undercut with the onset of the Wars of the eighteen-sixties. The possibility of organic unity between Maori and European was temporarily lost at this time, and many of the texts surrounding the period like Major B. Stoney's Taranaki: a Tale of the War (1861)[75] and the "ineffably dreary"[76] Ena (1874) of George H. Wilson were seen by an affronted McCormick to distort Maori into bloodthirsty savages. In a move later followed by Simon During,[77] McCormick attempted to restore a perception of Maori-Pakeha unity through F. E. Maning's Old New Zealand (1863).[78] Describing Maning as wise and penetrating, McCormick suggested that in

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[73]ibid, pp.72-75.
[74]E. H. McCormick, 'Last, Loneliest, Most Loyal', in Keith Sinclair, ed., Distance Looks Our Way: The Effects of Remoteness on New Zealand (Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade for the University of Auckland, 1962), p.118.
[75]McCormick, Letter and Art, p.79.
[76]ibid, p.80.
[77]Simon During, 'What Was the West? Some Relations Between Modernity, Colonisation and Writing' Sport 4 (1990), pp.83-87.
[78]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.81.

certain scenes "his narrative skill was blended with imaginative sympathy to produce an effect that is reminiscent of the best prose translations of Homer".[79] McCormick viewed Maning as a Pakeha-Maori who had spent such a large amount of time with Maori that he could act as translator between the two races, bringing the two racial branches of the country closer together. Simon During states that Old New Zealand "should have been hailed as the national epic . . ."[80] for the same reasons. In both cases an attempt was made to find a unifying text that could act to promote an organic unity between the Maori and European experiences of colonisation.

Chapter five was demarcated through reference to the next "clearly defined phase of New Zealand's history, roughly bounded by the nineties . . .".[81] McCormick's underlying historical narrative was laid bare again as he introduced a period of legislative innovation and economic growth under the Liberal Party during the final decade of the century. McCormick saw hints of a parallel creative strength in the poets William Pember Reeves and Jessie Mackay, citing Mackay's The Spirit of Rangatira (1889) as evidence of "the first clear signs of national self-awareness".[82] The advent of colonial born writers was of importance to McCormick, and he mentioned contributions from Edith Searle Grossman, Jessie Weston, Anne Glenny Wilson, and Arthur H. Adams that suggested to him an increasing complexity in the social pattern related to an emergence from pioneering conditions (although he tended to describe the female writers with epithets like "adolescent"[83] and "crudely immature").[84] Although McCormick's use of an underlying historical narrative to order his criticism drew censure from various quarters[85] it must be noted that the technique served him well because developments in social and historical patterns did indeed lead to a greater level of literary output in late nineteenth century New Zealand, as the population swelled and writers began to find a niche in their society.

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[79]ibid, p.84.
[80]During, 'What Was the West?', p.83.
[81]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.104.
[82]ibid, pp.107-108.
[83]ibid, p.107.
[84]ibid, p.110.
[85]Particularly from Allen Curnow and (later) Kendrick Smithyman, who both asserted that literary criticism should focus on the text itself rather than the surrounding historical environment.

In the same vein McCormick went on to mention institutional advances such as the opening of the Wellington School of Design (1886) and the Auckland Art Gallery (1888), as well as the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (1889).[86] The arrival of professional artists Petrus Van der Velden and James Nairn confirmed to McCormick that the "emergence from pioneering conditions is nowhere more evident than in the public recognition of art during the late eighties and early nineties".[87] The tone in chapter five was initially optimistic, with creative advances appearing to follow in tandem with legislative innovation.

Augustus Hamilton's The Art Workmanship of the Maori Race in New Zealand (1896)[88] and A. A. Grace's Tales of a Dying Race (1901)[89] presented a different angle on the decade, however. McCormick noted the prevalent misconception throughout early twentieth-century New Zealand culture that Maori were a doomed race,[90] and used it to illustrate what he perceived to be an underlying inadequacy in self-expression during the decade. Even the creation of the New Zealand Illustrated magazine in 1899 did little to prompt significant expansion, in McCormick's mind.[91] The hope of national self-awareness and a new phase of sophisticated literary growth had been premature and would not surface again until the nineteen thirties.[92] As Samuel Butler had pointed out twenty years earlier:

> New Zealand seems far better adapted to develop and maintain in health the physical than the intellectual nature. The fact is, people here are busy making money; that is the inducement which led them to come in the first instance, and they show their sense by devoting their energies to the work.[93]

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[86]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.118.
[87]ibid, pp.118.
[88]ibid, p.115.
[89]ibid, p.116.
[90]ibid, p.115.
[91]ibid, pp.122-124.
[92]ibid, p.125.
[93]Samuel Butler, A First Year in Canterbury Settlement: With Other Early Essays, ed. R. A. Streatfield (London: A. C. Fifeld, 1914), p.50.

For McCormick, such a vision of New Zealand society in the nineteenth century was confirmed with the embarkation of William Pember Reeves for London in 1896. Cultured society was not to be found (in exile) on the periphery.

Exile was a dominant theme in Eric McCormick's professional life.[94] In chapter six of Letters and Art the concept represented a metaphor for the first thirty years of the twentieth century, evoking a sense of dislocation and ennui reminiscent of the emerging modernist era in Europe at the same time. Starting in "The Nineties", McCormick related the disappearance from New Zealand of Pember Reeves. In "Between Two Hemispheres" this writer was joined by Alan Mulgan and Katherine Mansfield, the implication being that the trip "Home"[95] was taken by any writer that could afford it in order to avoid the loss of cultured society on the periphery of empire. There was an equal sense in McCormick's use of the concept that even those that had left remained in exile; exile from an inadequate New Zealand. McCormick's conception of exile was not as simple as mere physical distance from Europe (which he often pointed out was a matter of relativity).[96] The issue for him was one of "spiritual"[97] exile, or exile from experience. McCormick viewed New Zealand in this period as suffering from a provincial malaise, meaning that in the process of differentiating from the mother country a measure of identity had been lost.[98] New Zealanders were no longer Englishmen, but in no true sense New Zealanders either[99] (the separation of Maori and Pakeha was evidence enough of this). Donal Smith describes the way in which Letters and Art "traces the attempt to break through inherited tradition and conventional language to get to New Zealand".[100] In many ways McCormick's theme was related to this kind of linguistic exile; an inability to find an appropriate mode of self-expression for the process of nation building ahead. The mood was typical of literary nationalists of the period. As Allen Curnow wrote:

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[94]Ken Arvidson, 'E. H. McCormick', in Robinson and Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p.318.
[95]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.161.
[96]McCormick, 'Last, Loneliest, Most Loyal', p.97.
[97]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.161.
[98]ibid, p.162.
[99]Michael King, 'Not Quite One of the Boys', in James Ross et al., eds, Writing a New Country, p.19.
[100]Smith, 'Eric McCormick's Cambridge', p.49.

> Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year,
> Will learn the trick of standing upright here.[101]

And yet the content of "Between Two Hemispheres" belied McCormick's pessimism. While the early twentieth century did produce some poetry that is still described as "fanciful, cosy, decorative, and precious",[102] and novels did tend to be "restricted in setting, almost banal in plot . . ."[103] the period fits well with a picture of a general upturn in creative output that peaked after the depression of the thirties. Novels set in pioneering days became popular out of nostalgia for simpler times. William Satchell's novels, such as The Toll of the Bush (1905) and The Greenstone Door (1914), depicted frontier New Zealand with a complexity of concept and plot that represented an advance on earlier novels,[104] and Jane Mander's The Story of a New Zealand River (1920) was judged lacking by McCormick only in terms of what he saw as an "excessive emotionalism".[105] Katherine Mansfield was broadly discussed by McCormick, as was Edith Searle Grossman. "Between Two Hemispheres" also pointed out the advances in scholarship made by S. Percy Smith, Elsdon Best and T. Lindsay Buick. H. Guthrie Smith's Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station (1921) was isolated for extensive praise. In poetry, B. E. Baughan, Eileen Duggan and Robin Hyde were noted for their appearance, but McCormick lamented an apparent inability on their part to fulfil their potential[106] (a judgement that is now contested).[107]

Despite his perception of an upturn in creative output, McCormick depicted New Zealand writers as being susceptible to flights of fancy and dependence on English

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[101]Allen Curnow, 'The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch', in Vincent O'Sullivan, ed., An Anthology of Twentieth Century New Zealand Poetry (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.120.
[102]Macd. P. Jackson and Elizabeth Caffin, 'Poetry', in Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, p.430.
[103]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.126.
[104]ibid, p.144.
[105]ibid, p.147.
[106]ibid, p.167.
[107]Michele Leggott, 'Opening the Archive: Robin Hyde, Eileen Duggan and the Persistence of Record', in Mark Williams and Michele Leggott, eds, Opening the Book: New Essays on New Zealand Writing (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995), pp.266-293.

literature. The literary milieu was further degraded in his mind by a flight of talent to Britain. No mention was made in the main text of Letters and Art in New Zealand to the popular (although admittedly hackneyed) book of poetry selected by Alexander and Currie, A Treasury of New Zealand Verse (1906) or the later selection by Quentin Pope, Kowhai Gold: An Anthology of Contemporary New Zealand Verse (1930).[108] Both texts are now recognised as important representative texts of the era despite their distinctively hollow appeal.[109] Mid-century literary nationalists like McCormick could often be negative about the tradition they inherited[110](to the point of omission in this case, although the works do get a cursory mention in the "Note on Sources" in the interests of a fulsome treatment of the topic). One gets the sense that McCormick was being careful in his appraisal of the state of New Zealand literature, unwilling to attribute success where there was only nascent development.

Letters and Art in New Zealand would have ended on a pessimistic note had the depression of the nineteen thirties not given McCormick renewed hope for the future of New Zealand literature. His assertion that the depression called into question New Zealand's right to plenty and prompted "a reorientation in outlook of major importance to New Zealand's literature . . ."[111] has not been seriously weakened. It is a credit to McCormick that he recognised the development of literature in New Zealand during the thirties as significant, because writers like Frank Sargeson and Robin Hyde were not very well known at the time. Their reputations were aided a great deal by Letters and Art. To McCormick and his fellow critics, the writers of the depression proved that New Zealand could produce a local literature of quality. Robin Hyde's Passport to Hell (1936) and Nor the Years Condemn (1938) were praised by McCormick as "impressive works of fiction . . ."[112] and Sargeson's Conversation With My Uncle (1936) was viewed as an example "of a local tradition that has hitherto been inarticulate".[113] Sargeson was held to be the first New Zealand writer to capture the local vernacular on the page, creating "a literary form quite new in this

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[108]Pope, ed., Kowhai Gold.
[109]Jackson and Caffin, 'Poetry', pp.405ff.
[110]Williams, 'Repetitious Beginnings', pp.81-82.
[111]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.169.
[112]ibid, p.175.
[113]ibid, p.182.

country".[114] Similarly, A. R. D. Fairburn's Dominion (1938) and Allen Curnow's Not in Narrow Seas (1939) were seen as evidence of a new-found level of self-expression in poetry. Only R. A. K. Mason and Denis Glover were criticised for an inherent failure of vision.[115] The advent of Phoenix and Tomorrow magazines, and the development of the Unicorn and Caxton Presses were noted as further advances in infrastructural terms that would allow continued expansion. "Close of a Century" ended Letters and Art in New Zealand on a note of optimism. Although McCormick perceived the beginnings of a decline in artistic quality, the development of New Zealand literature gave him "signs, few but positive, of adult nationhood".[116] In closing his seminal work, McCormick appeared ready to accept the future health of the New Zealand literary project.

Later interpretations of Letters and Art have assumed a central importance to any evaluation of the work, and as such they cannot be ignored in this analysis. Written as initial explorations of New Zealand literature and culture, the essays soon developed a critical apparatus that lent much to their ongoing appeal. For instance John Geraets suggested in 1983 that the "archaeology"[117] of New Zealand literature has been dominated by culturally laden assumptions instigated in the main by a triumvirate consisting of E. H. McCormick, M. H. Holcroft and Allen Curnow.[118] W. H. Oliver identified Letters and Art and The Deepening Stream as "the foundations of a critical tradition and . . . a small but real intellectual revolution".[119] In a similar vein, Dennis McEldowney has suggested that Letters and Art created one half of a national canon that was completed by Curnow in A Book of New Zealand Verse five years later.[120] Stuart Murray notes the importance of all three works in "New Zealand's search for a self-image".[121] Interconnections such as these between the three texts are commonplace in the historical record, with Letters and Art generally taking centre

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[114]ibid, p.181.
[115]ibid, p.189.
[116]ibid, p.170.
[117]John Geraets, 'The New Zealand Anthology - initiating an archaeology', And/1 (1983).
[118]ibid, p.70.
[119]Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination, 1940-1980', p.539.
[120]Dennis McEldowney, 'Following On', in James Ross et al., eds, Writing a New Country, p.30.
[121]Murray, Never a Soul at Home, pp.26-27.

stage. The constant references to these three works by later critics stands as evidence of their ongoing influence on late twentieth century New Zealand literary and cultural debate.

Despite the fact that certain elements of a literary-cultural tradition were present in New Zealand prior to 1940, it has been generally recognised (since an essay by Terry Sturm in 1966) that although the twenties and the depression of the nineteen-thirties witnessed an upturn in creative production, the central lessons were not rationalised as a New Zealand cultural aesthetic until the war years and after.[122] His point was that although New Zealand writing had been plentiful since the onset of colonisation, it had never been successfully conceptualised as "New Zealand literature", a step which required a whole new apparatus of literary-cultural interpretation. This is a fine distinction to make, but of real importance to a proper understanding of New Zealand's cultural development during the early twentieth century. Literary critique suggests that mere literary and cultural development (the production of poems and short stories) does not in itself create an environment conducive to examinations of deep aesthetic problems. It is necessary to organise those primary products into identifiable classes and genera, trace their genealogical development, and comment upon opportunities for future development. In New Zealand, this process occurred immediately after the depression of the nineteen thirties, not during. In large part, the increase in literary production during the depression provided the "stock" necessary to develop both a literary-historical canon and theories of cultural and aesthetic identity during World War Two: elementary requirements for further understanding and development of New Zealand's literary and cultural identity.

Despite such insights, revisionist interpretations have often obscured the reasons behind the longevity of Letters and Art. The work represented an integrated vision of New Zealand culture and society that can be attributed to McCormick's adherence to a particular interpretation of literature and art. McCormick viewed all developments in literature and art through the lens of society, with creative endeavour assimilating

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[122]Terry Sturm, 'New Zealand Poetry and the Depression', in Wystan Curnow, ed., Essays on New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), pp. 16-28.

to the land and people as a corollary to increasing social development. In order to provide cogency to his account of the development of art and letters in New Zealand, McCormick employed a grand narrative of New Zealand's social development from early exploration through to the depression of the nineteen-thirties. Aesthetic judgement was made largely on the basis of creative fidelity to this grand narrative rather than any independent norm of discrimination. James K. Baxter supported a similar interpretation of Letters and Art in 1967 when he described the work as "by its nature descriptive and discursive rather than analytical . . .".[123] In McCormick's favour, it was these same characteristics that lent Letters and Art in New Zealand its longevity, because the resultant work was accessible to the general reader and appropriate for a wide range of educational uses. Moreover, McCormick's critical judgements were often isolated for examination during the nineteen-eighties without a significant lessening of esteem for the work.

Letters and Art in New Zealand is a significant text in terms of New Zealand's literary and cultural identity. Its development within the governmental sphere meant that it was institutionalised as the dominant literary history of New Zealand from its inception (and in many respects it has fulfilled this particular role admirably). Moreover, its quality of scholarship has made it difficult to surpass. In tracing the development of New Zealand literature from its beginnings with the first explorers and beyond to the Maori past, McCormick put forward an organicist conception of New Zealand culture that at least attempted to provide continuity to human activity from its outset on the islands. The inherent failure of this organicist vision in uniting the two races and the inability of McCormick to come to terms with colonial "exile" were failures of vision representative of the period. Such was the paucity of critical commentary prior to World War Two that such questions had hardly been asked, let alone answered. The unfolding of these problems over the next fifty years of literary cultural writing have proven just how fraught the task of creating a local critical framework for literature in a new nation really is.

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[123]James K. Baxter, Aspects of Poetry in New Zealand (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1967), p.23.

For this reason, McCormick's contribution to New Zealand literary critique can best be described as ground breaking. The essay was the first full account of New Zealand literature written, and it remained a standard educative and scholarly text for over fifty years. Letters and Art in New Zealand presented the New Zealand literary community with exactly the kind of text required for the development of a national literary aesthetic, putting forward not only a prose canon, but basic interpretative strategies that summed up the concerns of the previous decade. Perhaps most important for the future development of literary critique was McCormick's strong cultural focus, that viewed New Zealand literature as an outgrowth of the British trunk. Moreover, in taking an anthropological approach McCormick was able to historicise New Zealand's literary texts and identify them as significant on the basis of their very presence in New Zealand culture, rather than measuring them against the "great" works of modern literature. The identification of a nascent New Zealand literary tradition (regardless of quality) enabled future writers to question, criticise and build upon their past, setting up a discourse between past, present and future within the confines of New Zealand's own cultural heritage. There was also a moral imperative behind Letters and Art in New Zealand, however, based around literary nationalism. McCormick clearly viewed literature as central to the developing New Zealand aesthetic, and in writing his essay, he intimated in Arnoldian fashion that knowledge of New Zealand's literary heritage could enrich the local culture. McCormick was not alone in his investigations into New Zealand's literary cultural identity, however, and the future path of literary critique did not have to rely on his insights alone. In significant respects M. H. Holcroft's The Deepening Stream (1940) and Allen Curnow's A Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923-1945 (1945) provided counterpoints to McCormick's achievements, and added a level of self-reflexivity commensurate with a mode that not only describes, but attempts to answer deep aesthetic questions.

ii] M. H. Holcroft, The Deepening Stream: Cultural Influences in New Zealand, 1940.

Of particular concern to literary critique as a distinct mode of writing is the essay that originated its *modus operandi* - its orientation towards an understanding and active construction of "New Zealand literature" as a concept. Monte Holcroft's essay The

Deepening Stream: Cultural Influences in New Zealand[124] has one obvious parallel to Letters and Art in New Zealand; it won the essay competition of the 1940 Centennial Celebrations and therefore owed much of its subsequent success to government patronage.[125] The essay also took as its central concern the relationship of creative expression (and literature in particular) to the New Zealand environment. Like McCormick, Holcroft employed organicist principles and asserted a special place in society for literature and the writer. In these and other more superficial respects Letters and Art in New Zealand and The Deepening Stream can be seen as consistent with one another, their similarities perhaps representative of a relatively shallow intellectual climate. Whereas Letters and Art was essentially (and necessarily) historical in outlook, "the critique which Holcroft formulated in the later thirties and early forties [was] the first attempt to provide a meaningful critical framework for the idea of a 'New Zealand literature'",[126] naturally leading the work towards questions of cultural theory and national identity that were peripheral to Letters and Art. Moreover, Holcroft's intensely self-reflexive stance represented a conscious attempt to raise criticism to the status of art. The Deepening Stream was the most deeply aesthetic literary critique to be written prior to 1983.

Montague Harry Holcroft was born in Rangiora in 1902, a year noted by Holcroft in later years for the publication of a mere seventeen books and pamphlets on New Zealand subjects, of which only eight were written in New Zealand.[127] Holcroft grew up in Christchurch and was educated at Christchurch Boys High School before taking a position as office boy at Aulsebrooks biscuit and confectionery factory in 1917.[128] After two years in this position, during which time he suffered the premature death of his mother at age forty-five,[129] Holcroft determined to travel in order to gather experience for a career as a writer. He eventually made his way to Sydney where he

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[124]M. H. Holcroft, The Deepening Stream: Cultural Influences in New Zealand (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1940).
[125]P. J. Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', in Rice, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand, p.334.
[126]Sturm, 'New Zealand Poetry and the Depression', pp.25-26.
[127]M. H. Holcroft, The Way of a Writer (Queen Charlotte Sound: Cape Catley Ltd, 1984), p.41.
[128]ibid, p.47.
[129]ibid, p.49.

settled as a dockyard clerk, short story writer and budding novelist, publishing in a wide variety of Australian periodicals such as The Australian Journal, Punch, Triad, Smith's Weekly, Bulletin (including literary essays on the infamous "Red Page") and several others.[130] During his time in Sydney he was involved in a failed marriage (that was to haunt him in later life with accusations that he abandoned his family), but the period also provided the background to his second novel, The Flameless Fire (1929). Prior to this publication, he had published Beyond the Breakers (1928) and he later published Brazilian Daughter (1931) but none of his novels was successful and Holcroft felt in later life that subsequent unpublished novels were of a higher quality.[131] After attempts to save his marriage in Sydney failed, Holcroft returned to New Zealand, where he made a brief start to his journalistic career as a sub-editor of the Christchurch Press before embarking for London in late 1928.

At age twenty-six, Monte Holcroft thus joined the expatriate New Zealand writers in London who were to so intrigue E. H. McCormick in later years. There is no doubting that Holcroft aspired to literary success in moving to London, the prospects of publication and thus a reasonable living being the main motives. In keeping with this aim (and in contrast to McCormick), Holcroft employed the services of a literary agent and attempted to get published, frequenting writers' haunts and weathering a string of rejections that were to continue until his last short story was published in 1937.[132] While in London, Holcroft kept in touch with other expatriates like D'Arcy Cresswell and Jane Mander (with whom he appears to have had a close and lasting friendship). Before Holcroft left for a tour of the Continent in 1929, Mander suggested to him that he should give up on London and return to New Zealand because of the overly competitive publishing market in Britain at the time.[133] It was advice Holcroft eventually took in 1930 after failing to elicit interest in his writing, but not before being heavily influenced in the interim by recent philosophical trends in Europe in the shape of Havelock Ellis' The Dance of Life (1923) and Herbert

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[130]ibid, pp.84-86.
[131]P. J. Gibbons, 'Non-Fiction', in Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, p.97.
[132]Holcroft, The Way of a Writer, p.120.
[133]ibid, pp.118-119.

Carr's The Freewill Problem (1928).[134] Later study along these same lines led Holcroft to mention A. Seth Pringle-Pattison's The Idea of God (1920) in The Deepening Stream.[135]

Returning to Wellington, Holcroft continued to try to make a career for himself as a writer of short stories and novels, undergoing hardship that he later attributed to his stance in chapter six of The Deepening Stream ("The Writer's Task")[136] where he stated that "[a] great responsibility rests on the serious writers of New Zealand to-day".[137] A second marriage and the prospect of a son led Holcroft to shift south to Christchurch in order to write for the Press and gain a more regular income. It was in this role that Holcroft met J. H. E. Schroder who was then editor of the literary page and was to become a considerable influence on Holcroft's essay style[138] (a collection of Holcroft's essays written for the Press during this period was published as Timeless World in 1945). Holcroft mentions in his autobiography the presence of Denis Glover,[139] Allen Curnow and Ngaio Marsh[140] in Christchurch and it seems as if he busied himself in the local literary scene before taking up a position with the Southland Times as a political and economic commentator in 1937.[141] It was in this same year that he began work on The Deepening Stream: Cultural Influences in New Zealand.

The Deepening Stream was not commissioned specifically for the centennial celebrations in 1940, but was awarded first prize in the essay competition[142] and gained publication by Denis Glover's Caxton Press largely on this basis. Holcroft began writing an extended essay on New Zealand during his first year at the Southland Times, a period described in his autobiography as one of relative security and stability that acted to coax knowledge out of him gained through years of

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[134]ibid, pp.121-122.
[135]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.17.
[136]Holcroft, The Way of a Writer, p.152.
[137]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.53,
[138]Holcroft, The Way of a Writer, pp.159-160.
[139]ibid, p.161.
[140]ibid, p.163.
[141]ibid, p.175.
[142]Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination 1940-1980', p.539.

travelling and reading. Journalism excited Holcroft by placing him in the world of "people and affairs"[143] while at the same time prompting him to draw associations between society and his own recently developed philosophy. Indeed, if McCormick patterned Letters and Art with a particular conception of history in mind then Holcroft patterned The Deepening Stream with his personal philosophy to the fore. Indeed this factor explains much of the negative criticism that surrounded The Deepening Stream, because Holcroft's belief system was both deeply felt and idiosyncratic to the point of being unintelligible to a large section of his audience.

Initial responses to The Deepening Stream were positive. Eric McCormick made a reference to the work in Letters and Art, describing it as "an important essay which appears too late to be considered in this survey",[144] and throughout the forties criticism was generally favourable, with commentators suggesting that The Deepening Stream was a "work to which any man of letters could put his name".[145] The work itself, published by The Caxton Press in Christchurch, sold out soon after publication and a second edition came out in 1946. Holcroft had clearly touched on issues that were topical to wartime New Zealanders. Nevertheless, The Deepening Stream came to be interpreted as a symbol of cultural uniformity, dependence on Britain and a myth of New Zealand's pastoral-utopian yearnings. Holcroft's essentially poetic nature came to strike many New Zealand critics as ethereal and withdrawn from the realities of modern life. He was a sensitive and thoughtful man and this did not make his writing palatable to New Zealand critics who yearned for a hard-edged philosophy that could wrestle with their country's cultural fixation with number eight wire and rugged masculinity.

Chapter One of The Deepening Stream covered only six pages (none of the eight chapters was longer than eleven pages), and presented an outline of New Zealand as a young nation tied "to the capitalist structure of other lands, especially Britain".[146] Holcroft viewed New Zealand as a symbol of remoteness and progressive social

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[143]Holcroft, The Way of a Writer, p.178.
[144]McCormick, Letters and Art, p.189.
[145]'New Zealand Culture: M. H. Holcroft's Centennial Essay', New Zealand Listener 4:81 (January 10, 1941), p.17.
[146]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.15.

experimentation, populated by cinema goers, gamblers and travellers; a "microcosmic"[147] attempt to create a ". . . British community . . . in the southern Pacific . . .".[148] The lack of a genuine proletariat or serious class divisions further suggested to Holcroft that New Zealand might be a symbol of a future socialism "of long and steady growth . . .".[149] This notion of growth was as important to Holcroft as it was to McCormick, in the same organicist sense that envisaged New Zealand culture as a branch of the British trunk. The conception was natural for most mid-century intellectuals in New Zealand (as elsewhere in the Commonwealth) because it implicitly suggested that success would arrive eventually, with appropriate toil. He stated that "I have always believed that a nation must pass through bitter struggle before it can achieve any real strength of soul".[150]

There were obvious difficulties associated with Holcroft's conception of national growth, especially in the context of the totalitarian states that were threatening global stability as Holcroft wrote The Deepening Stream.[151] Holcroft referred to a "national ethos"[152] that could be discerned through music, art and literature in the older nations like Italy and Germany, a concept also representative of a bond between the individual and the collective mind.[153] Yet he was unable to reconcile this belief in a national soul with the prevalent tendency in Europe at the time towards fascism and totalitarian control. Hegel, for instance, while suggesting a means of categorising the nationalist urge, was seen by Holcroft to have betrayed his logic with "German prejudices"[154] that were later expressed (differently but more forcefully) in "the declamations of the diseased Nietzsche!".[155] And yet Holcroft was at one with these writers in viewing nationalism as nothing more or less than "a condition of survival"[156] against the inexorable advance of history. He believed that "[t]he soul of a nation is that indestructible work of the collective spirit which can knit a people into

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[147]ibid, p.14.
[148]ibid.
[149]ibid.
[150]ibid, p.15.
[151]Williams, 'Literary Scholarship', p.710.
[152]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.16.
[153]ibid, p.17.
[154]ibid, p.16.
[155]ibid.
[156]ibid, p.17.

a unified group and strengthen it against the struggles and calamities from which no age can hope to escape".[157] Holcroft's only possible defence against this contradiction in his logic reflected the typical intellectual stance of New Zealanders during this period. In effect, he simply deferred to New Zealand's provincial status in relation to Britain, frequently suggesting that New Zealand had not yet discovered its soul.[158] In this manner the contradictions largely disappeared, because Holcroft's argument was related to a Dominion (as opposed to a nation) whose very title suggested a diminution of responsibility. Holcroft viewed New Zealand as an adolescent nation at best and was in favour of a solidification of the provincial stance rather than an outright declaration of creative independence.[159] The attainment of responsibility (in intellectual respects) would follow the discovery of a New Zealand soul. Although Holcroft did not believe he could discover it on his own he was clearly interested in getting the process underway, by prompting New Zealanders to "make a new journey into the wilderness".[160]

Throughout The Deepening Stream this element of Holcroft's thought was extended. In chapter two he contrasted New Zealanders' interest in outdoor pursuits such as amateur botany, holidays in motor camps and mountaineering with an underlying complacency in the population that eschewed a sentimental attachment to the land. Because his philosophy was inherently organicist this lack of assimilation to the land was suggestive to Holcroft of a much deeper issue. In The Deepening Stream tourist brochures and tikis appeared to rest against more "sinister"[161] reminders of "The Primeval Shadow" like the bush of Westland. Holcroft used ephemeral, transitory images of New Zealand popular culture to draw attention to the reality behind them. It was characteristic of Holcroft's prose that he set up binaries such as this, between surface and depth, light and dark, old and new. The technique was effective in that it aided in understanding through the use of a simple juxtaposition of images, but many readers were affronted by apparently bald associations arrived at through this process. Bill Pearson was one of several readers who felt that Holcroft

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[157]ibid, pp.16-17.
[158]ibid, p.17.
[159]ibid, p.48.
[160]ibid, p.86.
[161]ibid, p.22.

was creating a cult of emptiness and dissociation that was anathema to the more developed cities of the North Island, where such finds were only accessible by archaeological excavation.[162] Pearson's point was basically valid, but it misrepresented Holcroft's inherently metaphysical conception of reality. He was attempting to search for first principles that could direct him towards an apprehension of the New Zealand soul.

An indication of Holcroft's (personal) philosophy lay in his reference in The Deepening Stream to A. Seth Pringle-Pattison's work The Idea of God (1916).[163] Pringle- Pattison's book contained one chapter in particular that is essential to a proper understanding of Holcroft's belief system: "Man as Organic to the World".[164] Placing himself in opposition to a line of philosophers from Descartes onwards, Pringle-Pattison asserted that the central failure of modern philosophy was a failure to view man as "organic to the world . . ."[165] meaning that earlier philosophers were wrong in their attribution of human experience to a cognitive process between the knower and the known, thereby "extruding man from the world he seeks to know".[166] In Pringle-Pattison's philosophy, reality was construed as *sui generis,*[167] so that any reference to cognition as an interaction between knower and known was simply a "mystification"[168]. The Idea of God suggested to Pringle-Pattison (and presumably Holcroft as well) that "[t]he word cognition misleads us by its exclusive reference to the object as something external; we forget that cognition is an experience of the soul . . .".[169] In this conception of reality, intellect and thought were viewed as continuous and inextricable from a world system in which mind and nature are believed to be in organic community. Holcroft's understanding of the relationship between intellectuals and their nation was inherently metaphysical, based upon a nature mysticism that asserted the primacy of experience *sui generis*. To a person with

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[162]Bill Pearson, 'The Recognition of Reality', in Bill Pearson, Fretful Sleepers and Other Essays (Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1974), p.144.
[163]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.17.
[164]A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), pp.110-132.
[165]ibid, p.111.
[166]ibid, p.112.
[167]ibid.
[168]ibid.
[169]ibid, p.113.

an inherently metaphysical (as opposed to Cartesian) belief system, nature and mind are inextricable, so criticism of Holcroft on the grounds of divergent geography was inadequate.

Several other influences on Holcroft's philosophy come to the fore in this context, especially Havelock Ellis' work The Dance of Life (1923). Holcroft read this exceptionally popular work while in London in 1929 (it had been reprinted nineteen times by that date), and he later attributed it to his subsequent interest in philosophy.[170] Ellis' philosophy was everywhere present, especially in his praise for thinkers like the Chinese philosopher Lao-tze. Lao-tze's writing was translated by Havelock Ellis into chapters on the arts of Dancing, Thinking, Writing, Religion and Morals. Like Pringle-Pattison, Ellis was a materialist who refused to separate nature and mind, hence the reference in the title of The Dance of Life to dancing as both a literal and figurative embodiment of human existence. Holcroft's attempts in The Deepening Stream to enunciate first principles of human existence on the islands of New Zealand was reminiscent of Ellis' attempts to distill an "essential reality". Herein lies the central tension in Holcroft's philosophy (like the colonial and post-colonial contexts more generally), the dualism that led critics like D. M. Anderson to present him as a contradictory muddle of materialist and idealist.[171] His search for first principles pointed to a basic problem encountered by many of his contemporaries. Whereas Pringle-Pattison and Ellis employed first principles to formulate a globally significant philosophy, Holcroft centred on New Zealand. He used his metaphysical belief system to explore what he perceived to be foregrounds to a national philosophy, in effect fencing off an area of study solely in the interests of purposive cultural inquiry. Such a move was natural and defensible in the colonial context.

The most obvious foreground to any New Zealand philosophy in Holcroft's mind was nature, as a symbol of both primitive impulses and the unknown. Rudolf Otto's book The Idea of the Holy (1923) was important in this context. Holcroft mentioned Otto's work in the last offering in The Deepening Stream trilogy, Encircling Seas

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[170]Holcroft, The Way of a Writer, pp.121-122.
[171]D. M. Anderson, 'Mr Holcroft's Islands', Landfall 21 (March 1952), p.12.

(1946) while discussing the "supernatural".[172] In particular, Holcroft referred to Otto's development of the word "numinous"[173] to refer to apparently *a priori* human reactions to nature and the unknown. Otto himself described the numinous as an emotional and psychological but non-rational reaction to "the Holy",[174] a "perfectly *sui generis* . . ."[175] attraction to the "Wholly Other"[176] that engendered a sense of mystery and fascination. Monte Holcroft's intellectual debt to Otto leached through his prose, in reference to "The Primeval Shadow",[177] "the struggle against the forest . . ."[178] or later and more directly, to "Mystery and Conflict"[179] and "an inrush of the ancient barbarism".[180] Nature mysticism and primitivism were common to the Europe that Holcroft visited during the twenties, coalescing in its most celebrated form in Weimar Germany and the writings of Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka and (later) Carl Jung.[181] Holcroft was singular in the history of New Zealand literary critique in his attempts to apply Continental ideas to the New Zealand context. Although his training was sadly lacking (at best he could be described as an amateur philosopher) the project that he undertook retains significance, perhaps even more so because of his intellectual debts to central European philosophers.

New Zealand literary nationalists like Holcroft were usually British in outlook, reflecting their colonial legacy and looking to Europe for cultural models, despite being part of a broader process of "cultural decolonisation"[182] prompted by access to American and other post-colonial literatures.[183] Stuart Murray has identified a strong element in Holcroft and other early New Zealand literary nationalists of "Settler

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[172]M. H. Holcroft, Encircling Seas: An Essay (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1946), p.92.
[173]ibid, p.93.
[174]Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Divine and its Relation to the Rational, trans. J. W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.5.
[175]ibid, p.7 (Otto's emphasis).
[176]ibid, p.25.
[177]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.19.
[178]ibid, p.26.
[179]M. H. Holcroft, Creative Problems in New Zealand (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1948), p.5.
[180]ibid, p.16.
[181]Holcroft, The Way of a Writer, p.123.
[182]Murray, Never a Soul at Home, p.15.
[183]ibid, p.16.

Modernity",[184] a local variant of European (and more precisely, British) modernism represented in literature by T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf.[185] Chapters Three ("Before the Earthquake") and Four ("Petrol Fumes") were particularly reminiscent of British modernism, and H. G. Wells in particular. The two chapters were rambling and conjectural, and "Petrol Fumes" in particular has been ridiculed for the use of the car as a symbol for global decline.[186] The Deepening Stream contained a passage in which Holcroft readily identified the level of his own interest in cars: "I recognize the value of the motor, and am ready to take advantage of its mobility whenever I am offered a ride in somebody else's machine".[187] Pointing out the pitfalls of time payments and so-called easy terms on motor cars as well as houses, Holcroft suggested it was symptomatic of a society that "gradually builds up a state of mind in which the capitalization of unearned income, the anticipation of profit and other financial expedients, can be accepted with equanimity".[188] Holcroft's attempt to use the motor car as a symbol of New Zealand's experience of modernity was not successful, because New Zealand at the time lacked the urban complexity necessary to carry the central premise of the symbol. Modernity is one literary concept that has transferred uneasily to the broader New Zealand context, its appearance often provoking claims that it is irrelevant and that New Zealand culture does not deserve to be associated with the exalted figures of European modernism.[189] Stuart Murray has articulated a corrective to this tendency in his concept of "settler modernism", by pointing out obvious interactions between the colonies and the metropolitan centres of Europe. Although it is a notoriously complex term,

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[184]ibid, p.9.

[185]Drabble and Stringer, eds, The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature, p.376:
"A sense of cultural relativism is pervasive in much modernist writing, as is an awareness of the irrational and the workings of the unconscious mind. Technically it was marked by a persistent experimentalism . . . . Modernist literature is a literature of discontinuity, both historically, being based upon a sharp rejection of the procedures and values of the immediate past, to which it adopts an adversarial stance; and aesthetically".

[186]Anderson, 'Mr Holcroft's Islands', p.13.

[187]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.41.

[188]ibid, p.42.

[189]An important episode in this regard relates to C. K. Stead's 'From Wystan to Carlos - Modern and Modernism in Recent New Zealand Poetry' (1979), which provoked hostile criticism from a variety of quarters.

"modernism" is a pervasive element of all twentieth century culture.

Symbolised by the motor car, modernity in The Deepening Stream appeared as evidence of an old world in decline, with New Zealand positioned as "an appanage [sic] of a decaying civilization . . .".[190] Pessimism like this was typical of early twentieth century modernism in Europe, reflected in its starkest forms in the nihilistic Dada movement and novels like Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932) that posited an inhuman future dominated by machines and totalitarian control. In Britain H. G. Wells had been writing novels of future world domination since The Time Machine in 1895, suggesting that scientific advance might lead the world to catastrophe. In these visions of the future, machines were viewed as symbols of a dysfunctional and decaying world. In a similar tone Holcroft surmised that New Zealand might replace Britain at the centre of a new empire after the old world had been devastated by aerial bombing.[191] Holcroft wondered "whether the agony of the old world might not be the condition of a future expansion in the Pacific".[192] At all times future oriented, Holcroft could not help engaging in speculation over the implications of another world war for New Zealand, clearly seeing the possibility of major gains. Futurism and science fiction have had a limited history in New Zealand, but the tendency is clearly present, from Julius Vogel's Anno Domini 2000 (1889)[193] to an entire periodical one hundred years later.[194]

Holcroft's visions of a future New Zealand may appear dated to the modern reader, but the tendency reflected the author's belief in the role of the artist as a seer, a cultural interpreter. He felt that "the spirit of a country, recognizable in history and literature, is a kind of collective definition undertaken by a line of creative writers".[195] Such a quotation reflects Holcroft's debt to the British critical tradition, and in particular the concept of the writer as seer associated with Matthew Arnold and later

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[190]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.32.
[191]ibid, p.35.
[192]ibid, p.33.
[193]Julius Vogel, Anno Domini 2000; or, Women's Destiny (London: Hutchinson, 1889).
[194]B. Thurogood, ed., Noumenon: The New Zealand Science Fiction Magazine (Waiheke Island, 1976-1982).
[195]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.29.

literary critics. A reinforcement of Holcroft's debt to this group of critics lies in his articulation of education as a means by which modern society might be saved. Like Q. D. Leavis in Fiction and the Reading Public (1932), Holcroft prescribed quality education in order to avoid the development of "a barren criticism and a naive aesthetic . . .".[196] Although clearly influenced by Leavisite thought, "A Wider Basis for Education" differed from the Leavises in its attention to particulars of the New Zealand context, leading Holcroft to assert the need for regionalism and education tailored to community needs.[197] His aim was to develop an educational infrastructure that would promote creativity through its diversity, a far remove from the Leavis' attempts to inculcate a system of mass education on a national or even international scale. Holcroft drew support for his arguments from a recognition of the efficacy of education in the development of totalitarian control (once again, Holcroft was both attracted and repelled by the nationalisms of Europe).[198] His stated aim in educating society was a belief that mere cultural importation was not enough, because "[t]he shape of cultural mutations must be defined first of all in the unconscious of society".[199] Holcroft saw it as "The Writer's Task" to draw these unconscious changes to the surface.

Holcroft was well aware of the toil involved with "The Writer's Task", especially in a country isolated from its major tradition by 12,000 miles. He had experienced first hand the effect of isolation on an aspiring writer, and his sixth chapter read autobiographically in its depictions of the lone New Zealand writer toiling against an indifferent society. The Deepening Stream actually reflected a change in Holcroft's orientation as a writer - the emphasis shifting from novels to criticism. He began to feel as though criticism could extend the experience of a good poem, and make a real contribution to the birth of a local literature. It was important to him that New Zealand should have well equipped critics who could avoid "intellectual rash[es]"[200] like Marxism, thereby ensuring that creative visions of New Zealand would "transcend the

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[196]ibid, p.45.
[197]ibid, p.49.
[198]ibid, p.51.
[199]ibid, p.45.
[200]ibid, p.71.

limits of emasculated theory".[201] Like McCormick, Holcroft also did a great deal in The Deepening Stream and subsequent literary-critical publications to privilege the nineteen-thirties as the birthplace of New Zealand literature, bringing Bethell and Duggan into the public consciousness and noting the centrality of figures like A. R. D. Fairburn and D'Arcy Cresswell (who had failed to elicit critical praise). It is widely held that Holcroft was the only critic of note in New Zealand at the time.[202]

Holcroft was essentially an essayist (he confessed that it was a style suited to him from a very early age[203]) and in line with his developing views on criticism he soon came to see the essay form itself as an important tool. In a published lecture to the W. E. A.[204] at Otago University in 1947, Holcroft made his views on the essay form quite clear, articulating at the same time what can be seen as a manifesto for future literary critique in New Zealand. His centrality to the essayistic tradition of literary critique should not be underestimated. His various critiques set forth in a highly self-reflexive form the very reasons why New Zealand needed a tradition of literary-cultural analysis. It is for this reason that his writing has been consistently identified as a central element in the "critical triumvirate". Despite the fact that Holcroft was never very esteemed as a writer or intellectual, he has frequently been identified as crucial to the development of a New Zealand literary aesthetic:

> And in New Zealand, where other forms of creative writing - with the exception of poetry - are still in a nascent condition, the essay can be used as a clearing house for ideas. If the ideas are of doubtful value, they can be argued and refuted; but the argument must be at a high level, and the process will then be, in effect, a clarification of purpose within the arts.[205]

The final two chapters of The Deepening Stream, "Experience and Ideas" and "The Adventurous Mind", presented Holcroft's vision of how New Zealand should

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[201]ibid, p.72.
[202]Murray, Never a Soul at Home, p.81.
[203]Holcroft, The Way of a Writer, p.20.
[204]Worker's Education Association
[205]Holcroft, Creative Problems in New Zealand, p.17.

best go about this task of cultural and artistic development. In particular, Holcroft opposed a decline into "intellectual nihilism"[206] that might sever ties with the past. He felt that an empirical reference to history solidified cultural interpretation. Despite being worried about the global situation, Holcroft wrote that New Zealand was largely shielded from the "gospel" [207] of mass opinion by an egalitarian and stubbornly individualistic spirit. Unfortunately, he also felt that the historical conditions of New Zealand's settlement "created the conditions for a slow mental advance",[208] a factor compounded by a lack of an academic tradition to attract top writers. In his mind, the only way around this paucity of intellectual activity was the development of a "New Zealand metaphysic"[209] that could act as "a centralizing effort of intellect that would be followed by an enrichment of the general culture".[210] Revealingly, and in line with his interest in philosophers like Pringle-Pattison and Herbert Carr, Holcroft claimed he was rejecting the modern philosophy of A. N. Whitehead and called for a return to the thought of Hobbes, Berkeley and Hume.[211] He exhorted his readers to leave the intellectual shallows and develop a national philosophy in line with the historical circumstances of settlement.

Although provocative, Holcroft's offering was (and still is) problematic. Despite the fact that his writing style and philosophy were opaque, he nevertheless sold many books for New Zealand's small publishing industry and prompted a great deal of critical attention. Critical responses to The Deepening Stream (and the later trilogy called Discovered Isles[212]) in the years following publication make explicit an obvious and understandable point of difference between it and Letters and Art, for instance. Specifically, whereas E. H. McCormick prompted only one negative review (from journalist Pat Lawlor of Truth[213]), Holcroft was subjected to numerous attacks on his writing style, intellectual integrity and general philosophy. Whereas

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[206]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.73.
[207]ibid, pp.75-76.
[208]ibid, p.77.
[209]ibid, p.83.
[210]ibid.
[211]ibid, p.81.
[212]M. H. Holcroft, Discovered Isles: a Trilogy : The Deepening Stream, The Waiting Hills, Encircling Seas (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1950).
[213]Sorrenson, 'The Making of Letters and Art', p.58.

McCormick was praised for his "lucid and invaluable"[214] contribution to New Zealand letters, critics were prone to point out such specifics of Holcroft's writing as his frequent use of "the indefinite article before an abstract noun not preceded by an attributive adjective: he speaks of '*a* true freedom', '*a* solicitude for the young', and so on".[215] The same critic accused Holcroft of deliberate vagueness through his frequent use of attenuant phrases like "a little" and "somewhat".[216] Even more critical was J. M. Winchester, who asserted that "[g]enerally, however, when he is not being banal he is preposterous, and can seriously put forward such propositions as that New Zealanders are afflicted with 'the Memory of a Voyage'".[217] D. D. Raphael's review of Encircling Seas was equally harsh and pointed in its philosophical criticisms.[218] At an early stage in his career Holcroft was characterised as amateurish and inattentive to the need for precise prose writing to get across his often complex ideas. Although The Deepening Stream and Holcroft's later writings are often referred to in histories of New Zealand literature and criticism as being at the core of a move towards a truly national literary tradition, there has been a surprising amount of denigration of his work.

Allen Curnow tended to defend Holcroft, despite a few misgivings over his style and philosophical intent, and was one of few who enjoyed Holcroft's cultural philosophy over McCormick's "social content".[219] Curnow characterised Holcroft as an essayist, a stylist who relied on a "poetically-toned prose"[220] to make his point, and later suggested that he could not have written his introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923-1945 "if Holcroft hadn't written his essays, and McCormick his *Letters and Art* . . .".[221] Curnow's support for Holcroft and a perception that they held

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[214]James Bertram, 'Towards a New Zealand Literature', in James Bertram, Flight of the Phoenix (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1985), p.86.
[215] Anderson, 'Mr Holcroft's Islands', p.5 (Anderson's emphasis).
[216]ibid.
[217]J. M. Winchester, 'The Widening Gulf: A Note on Holcroft', Hilltop 1 (April 1949), p.11.
[218]D. D. Raphael, review of Encircling Seas, by M. H. Holcroft, in Landfall (March 1947), pp.56-63.
[219]Geraets, 'The New Zealand Anthology', p.70.
[220]Allen Curnow, review of Dance of the Seasons, by M. H. Holcroft, in Landfall 27 (September, 1953), p.217.
[221]Allen Curnow, 'A Dialogue with Ngaio Marsh', in Allen Curnow, Look Back

shared motives in their writing, led a younger group of writers to suggest that the pair (along with Charles Brasch) had propagated a "South Island Myth"[222] based on "Holcroftian"[223] social realism and a wholesale application of the pathetic fallacy. Curnow himself denied the charge[224] and was supported by C. K. Stead in the Auckland Winter lectures of 1960, but the debate was heated – centering around the utility of terms such as regionalism and nationalism, and whether South Island writers had developed a sickly aesthetic that had no basis in experience for most New Zealanders. In large part the debate developed as a result of increasing urbanisation in the North Island, and a growing gap between the experience of North and South Island writers and artists. Kendrick Smithyman criticised Holcroft, Brasch and Curnow on the grounds of an unimpressive metaphysic, and accused Holcroft of an "ingenuous lack-logic".[225] Younger writers tended to view Holcroft's language as prescriptive and opaque. The debate has never been quite resolved and continued to be levelled in various forms until the nineteen eighties when Roger Horrocks[226] enlisted James K. Baxter's much earlier opinion that Holcroft and Curnow had propagated a "myth of insularity"[227] that was creatively unhealthy.

Attacks such as these, that isolated a South Island Myth or claimed the presence in New Zealand of a triumvirate of cultural mythmakers, had the effect of isolating a more general impression of a dominant "Reality Gang"[228] of mid-century poets and writers consisting of Allen Curnow, A. R. D. Fairburn, Charles Brasch, Keith Sinclair and various others including Monte Holcroft. That Holcroft was a central element in both the South Island Myth and various historians' suggestion of a literary-cultural

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Harder: Critical Writings 1935-1984 (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p.80.

[222]C. K. Stead, 'For the Hulk of the World Between', in C. K. Stead, In the Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1981), p.251.

[223]Curnow, review of Dance of the Seasons, p.224.

[224]ibid, pp.223-224.

[225]Smithyman, A Way of Saying, p.38.

[226]Roger Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', pp.22-23.

[227]James K. Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil: The Macmillan Brown Lectures given at Victoria University College in June 1954', in Frank McKay, ed., James K. Baxter as Critic: A Selection From His Literary Criticism (Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1978), p.53.

[228]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.21.

triumvirate suggests something of his influence. C. K. Stead pointed out in his defence that he did not "think anyone aware of the emptiness of New Zealand's intellectual life at the time Mr Holcroft began writing could blame him for finding it necessary to discuss literary problems with hills rather than with human beings".[229] Stead's remark holds equally well for Curnow, Fairburn, Brasch and Sinclair. These debates are two of several that have provided literary critique with ongoing and inter-related strains of discourse over its history in the late twentieth century. Each author utilised the form to rationalise and defend their intellectual stance at the same time as inserting themselves into the literary record. Unlike McCormick, M. H. Holcroft has proven to be a popular point of entrance because of his idiosyncratic prose and lack of a clear critical framework.

Holcroft's rambling mind constantly displaced his central point in The Deepening Stream. He was an inquisitive critic imbued with passion and little direction. Some passages in The Deepening Stream back up this interpretation of Holcroft:

> Few things are more dismaying to me than the thought of a spurious culture, composed of notions and novelties brought in from other lands, and failing to generate any original life of its own because there is no native strength which can absorb the alien elements and give them new values in the affirmations of a local spirit.[230]

In attempting to force the development of a sophisticated and significant local culture, Holcroft was often led into writing that appeared to his contemporaries to be not only plaintive and unnecessary, but badly written. The main objections to Holcroft's writing lay in his appropriation of philosophical positions like those of Carr, Otto and Ellis, because it was these very influences that made The Deepening Stream difficult for his uninitiated readers. The status quo was that of Europe rather than New Zealand and a level of understanding was apparently lost in translation. In adopting the role of cultural critic, Holcroft had lost his Horatian authority.

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[229]Stead, 'For the Hulk of the World Between', p.249.
[230]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, pp.44-45.

Despite being criticised frequently, however, Monte Holcroft and The Deepening Stream have failed to elicit any extended discussions of the author's philosophy and its relationship to his critical stance. Stuart Murray comes close in his discussion of Holcroft in Never a Soul at Home, but Holcroft only appears in relation to Ursula Bethell and Eileen Duggan (whom he staunchly supported). Murray recognises Holcroft's attempt to formulate a "cultural psychology"[231] for New Zealand and his orientation towards the land as a source of creative energy, but the discussion is brief and Murray concerns himself with the entire trilogy rather than The Deepening Stream as a specific and canonical text. It is necessary to keep in mind the critics' assertions that Holcroft had a habit of "offering a symbol and calling it a cause . . ."[232] and clouded his writing with opaque references, but the importance of The Deepening Stream to New Zealand literature generally, and literary critique in particular, demands attention.

Holcroft and The Deepening Stream occupy a central position in both the development of New Zealand literature, and literary critique specifically. Although at times harshly criticised for both his writing style and philosophy, Holcroft's ideas have survived and continue to provide literary critics and authors alike with a sense of their relation to the geography and culture of New Zealand. There was an inherent dualism in Holcroft, however. Not only did his prose often proceed through an examination of binaries, but there was an innate contradiction in his logic between a universal materialism and nationalistic idealism. In this sense Holcroft was a classic representative of "settler modernity", torn between the particular and the universal in both physical and metaphysical terms. The Deepening Stream itself had an essentially historical quality, however. Placed in tandem with McCormick's Letters and Art, Holcroft's essay "helped establish the boundaries for what a local literature might be",[233] while at the same time prompting healthy and open critical debate that invigorated the local writing community.

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[231]Murray, Never a Soul at Home, p.80.
[232]Anderson, 'Mr Holcroft's Islands', p.13.
[233]Murray, Never a Soul at Home, p.81.

The Deepening Stream was significant because it examined the cultural aesthetic that lay behind New Zealand's literary tradition. Holcroft was attempting to raise New Zealand literary criticism to the status of art, using cultural analysis to posit searching moral questions about New Zealand's aesthetic inheritance and future. Although his intensely self-reflexive stance created an essay that was opaque to many of his readers, he provided literary critique with an essential component: personality. McCormick's offering was scholarly and clear-sighted, but it lacked the fundamental personalism of Holcroft's offering. In searching after the New Zealand literary aesthetic, Holcroft had presented his readers with his innermost thoughts, his innermost feelings about his nation and its culture. Indeed, literary critique as a mode is bound together by just this kind of personalism; it proffers judgements and insights based on self-knowledge as much as rationalism or empiricism. In tandem with Letters and Art, The Deepening Stream presented New Zealand with not only a literary canon, but a cultural aesthetic. The publication of Allen Curnow's A Book of New Zealand Verse, 1923-1945 in 1945 completed the triumvirate and cemented literary critique in New Zealand as a necessary mode of expression for the task of nation building ahead.

iii] Allen Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945, 1945.

Allen Curnow's 1945 anthology A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945 offered an important corrective to tendencies present in both Letters and Art and The Deepening Stream in terms of the development of literary critique in New Zealand. In particular, Curnow's introduction to the anthology acted to fuse McCormick's socio-historical bias and Holcroft's cultural philosophy into a powerful myth of New Zealand identity that has provided the mode with its main motive force throughout the late twentieth century. Author after author who has used literary critique to engage in the discourse of New Zealand literature refers to Curnow as the dominant "maker of plots"[234] within that dialogue, at once creating and obfuscating a sophisticated conception of what New Zealand literature might be. Much of the force of Curnow's essay was his ability to raise criticism to the status of art. His status as a dominant figure in New

[234]James Wieland, 'Reality's Adam: A Study of the Place of Myth in the Poetry of Allen Curnow', Landfall 136 (December 1980), p.386.

Zealand poetic circles allowed him a certain amount of creative licence that moulded his critical precepts into a powerful myth of New Zealand identity. Curnow also lent the mode a level of Horatian authority, in that neither McCormick nor Holcroft could (or did) claim to be primarily creative writers. Much of the criticism levelled at McCormick and Holcroft was related not so much to their conflation of literature and history (or philosophy), as to their lack of authority as creative writers themselves; a factor which weakened the force of their work in later years. Curnow's position was closer to Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot (who both wrote poetry) than F. R. Leavis who consistently refused to engage in purely creative work. Lionel Trilling was similarly disinterested in creative work, although he did write a novel. The choice represents an overt distinction between literary critics. Curnow's development of literary critique in his introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse tangibly set the poet and writer at the centre of articulations of New Zealand identity, and asserted the need for poets to take on a public role. In this sense, Curnow implicitly subscribed to the notion of poets as the "New Jeremiahs". To reapply Holcroft's words, A Book of New Zealand Verse acted to "assist in the birth"[235] of New Zealand literature and prepared the grounds for a critical debate that would extend over two decades past the end of war in 1945.

Allen Curnow was born in Timaru in 1911 to an Anglican minister and amateur lyricist of some accomplishment. His mother was English,[236] but The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature notes that he identified as a fourth generation New Zealander[237] (an important factor in his later associations with New Zealand cultural nationalism). Curnow had strong regional associations with Canterbury early in his career, being educated at Christchurch Boys High School before joining The Sun as a cadet journalist.[238] In later years these connections tended to reinforce the perception of him as a propagandist for the South Island Myth, because his critics were well aware of his links to Canterbury and the South Island. After high school Curnow initially intended to follow his father into the ministry, and shifted to

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[235]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.63.
[236]Peter Simpson, 'Allen Curnow', in Robinson and Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p.122.
[237]ibid.
[238]Alan Roddick, Allen Curnow (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.59.

Auckland where he attended St John's Theological College from 1931 to 1933.[239] It was here that he was first published, in the Auckland University magazine Kiwi edited by James Bertram. Later he was also published in Phoenix and came to be associated with figures such as A. R. D. Fairburn, R. A. K. Mason and J. C. Beaglehole.[240] At the same time he abandoned plans to enter the ministry, returning to Christchurch in 1934 where he eventually found work as a journalist at The Press, a vocation he continued until 1948.[241]

Prior to his appearance as a poet-anthologist in 1945 Curnow published mainly poetry, in addition to scattered pieces of critical prose in The Press and periodicals such as Phoenix, Tomorrow and the Australian Meanjin.[242] His first volume of poetry was Valley of Decision: Poems (1934), which was followed by Aspects of Monism (1935), Enemies (1937) and the work that solidified his reputation as a cultural nationalist, Not in Narrow Seas: Poems With Prose (1939). This final work of the nineteen thirties neatly encapsulated Curnow's tendency to mythologise history through poetry, the juxtaposition of poetry and prose pointing out his use of poetry as a means by which the imaginative scope of historical accident could be expanded:

> Eighty years since salted sails
> Dropped among these hills
> And the iron water closed on
> The anchor's dry iron.
>
> Bedding and tents and stores
> Littered the frontiers
> Of a country taken
> To be stripped and broken.
>
> Not a leap of capture theirs,

[239]Simpson, 'Allen Curnow', p.122.
[240]ibid.
[241]Roddick, Allen Curnow, p.60.
[242]Peter Simpson, 'A Checklist of Allen Curnow's Critical Prose', Journal of New Zealand Literature, 4 (1986), pp.48-55.

But as who safely dares,
Seizing without sword
Front garden and backyard.[243]

Other publications that appeared before A Book of New Zealand Verse included Island and Time (1941) and Landfall in Unknown Seas (1942), the latter being commissioned by the government to commemorate the tercentenary of Tasman's sighting of New Zealand and used as the basis for an orchestral composition by Douglas Lilburn.[244] A significant sideline in Curnow's poetic career lay in his verse satire "Whim-Wham", which he wrote at The Press and published in collected form between 1940 and 1967.[245] Curnow was reticent about discussing Whim-Wham, suggesting that it took attention away from his more serious work.[246] In point of fact it did, because there was a large and regular audience to read it. As cultural satire, Whim-Wham has lasting significance, especially as an example of an ongoing critique of what Bill Pearson was later to call secular Puritanism:[247]

Don't deviate from the Sacred Norm
Don't be Yourself - there's Nothing sillier.
Play safe. Conform!
It can't be wrong if Its familiar.[248]

It is a significant fact that Curnow was one of very few New Zealand writers of his generation who remained in New Zealand throughout his development as a young writer. McCormick and Holcroft were both heavily influenced by their overseas experiences and the theme of exile, but Curnow remained in New Zealand until 1949 when he went to London as the first recipient of the Literary Fund travel allowance.[249]

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[243]Allen Curnow, Not in Narrow Seas (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1939), p.2.
[244]Roddick, Allen Curnow, p.8.
[245]Allen Curnow, Whim-Wham Land (Auckland: Paul, 1967).
[246]MacD. P. Jackson, 'Conversation With Allen Curnow', Islands 4 (Winter, 1973), p.148.
[247]Bill Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers', pp.26-27.
[248]Allen Curnow, 'Don't Go Away Sad, Either', in Curnow, Whim-Wham Land, p.36.
[249]Roddick, Allen Curnow, p.60.

As such his dominant themes during the war years were based on purely New Zealand referents, be they of a social, historical, or geographical nature. Curnow's central metaphor was the "Beach", seen as a dividing line between land and sea, a meeting place of people and a symbol of New Zealand's island status. He was particularly attentive to New Zealand's geographical position on the globe, giving readers a sense of their country's isolation and the importance of locating reality through cartography. In his early career as a poet, Curnow attempted to tether New Zealanders to their island home and move beyond the flaccid romanticisation of New Zealand as a Victorian nirvana. The footnotes to his introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse contained no reference to texts outside New Zealand (although the content often pointedly looks for outside reference points). Rather than being persuaded into producing the work by Cambridge academics, government or an extended "overseas experience", Allen Curnow simply expressed himself (in true Horatian fashion) as a poet, and a New Zealand one at that. His purpose was initially educative, however. He wanted to redirect the discourse of New Zealand criticism away from what he believed to be faded, romantic poets:

> I suppose about 1942 or 1943, and at about two o'clock in the morning at my desk in *The Press* office, when I finished with the night's work, I thought: it's time we had an anthology of the poets I really like. It's time, perhaps, we had an anthology that would dispose finally of the fifty-six poets of *Kowhai Gold* and the seventy-odd poets of the *Treasury of New Zealand Poetry* - or of most of them. I scribbled a note to a publishing group in Wellington called the Progressive Publishing Society, giving them a brief sketch of what I meant to do. Choosing the poems and writing the introduction took a year or two. The whole thing was in typescript in 1944 when Denis Glover returned from naval service after the Normandy invasion. The Wellington group having folded, Glover said: 'We must do that anthology'. So it was done, at Caxton.[250]

[250]Jackson, 'Conversation With Allen Curnow', p.149.

Curnow's introduction consisted of a forty-four page (c.15,000 words) essay divided into 15 parts of unequal length. As the author explained in the opening section, "precedent, here or elsewhere, has been no guide in planning a New Zealand anthology at this time".[251] The presence of Kowhai Gold and A Treasury of New Zealand Verse only symbolised to Curnow the need for a more discriminating anthology that could take advantage of the "maturer, more exacting criticism . . ."[252] started in New Zealand by McCormick and Holcroft during the centenary year. The opening passages to his introduction set up a revealing discourse concerning the nascent nature of both New Zealand literature and culture, with Curnow constantly intimating to his audience that New Zealand had not yet matured. Much of the force of this strain of his writing stemmed from his use of English literary figures at the start of each section to expand upon the points that follow (extracts from New Zealand authors were used to preface later sections); the technique represented a conscious effort on the part of Curnow to locate New Zealand both within, and in opposition to, the British literary tradition. The sense was of a provincialism deferred, a culture in limbo:

> That promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness: but to have desired to enter it, to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity.
>
> *Matthew Arnold*[253]

It was this sense of dislocation from experience that informed Curnow's critical method, which attempted to focus analysis on the text itself rather than any socio-historical or philosophical angle. It was the method of a poet rather than a historian or philosopher. Rather than posit a socio-historical background against which texts could be measured, the poem was taken to hold within itself the true New Zealand reality. It was the critic's job to bring that reality to the surface. Curnow criticised McCormick

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[251]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.15.
[252]ibid, p.14.
[253]Matthew Arnold, cited in, Curnow, A Book of New Zelaand Verse, p.15.

on the grounds of "a too-rigid perseverance in his social-historical method"[254] that led him to work poets into a preconceived pattern, rather than acknowledging that "he is in it; his presence there modifies it; and criticism must work from within the text".[255] Curnow much preferred Holcroft's "social philosophy"[256] that acknowledged the presence of poets as an "irreducible reality"[257] in New Zealand culture. In this manner, Curnow's critical attitude realigned literary critique (and cultural theory in New Zealand generally) further towards the Horatian notion of the poet as seer and arbiter of cultural truths. The standpoint is unmistakeably post-romantic at its core, while retaining the central romantic belief that literature can provide society with an Archimedean point that ensures the legitimacy of any conclusions reached. Implicit in this stance was a belief that poets should adopt a public role.

Sections three and four opened with passages from William Pember Reeves, Arthur H. Adams, and Robin Hyde and took the form of a historical outline of New Zealand literature prior to 1945. Curnow largely deferred to McCormick's judgement regarding the early years of settlement, but was more overt in his characterisation of the period as one of ennui and dislocation, even unreality. Curnow felt that by the eighteen-nineties it was common for New Zealanders to see literature as "disembodied from any living and tangible surrounding",[258] thus trapping the colonists in a receding past of Tennyson and Browning - of a sterile English canon that had become a mere flight of fantasy as time progressed. Flight from the actualities of New Zealand experience came to symbolise for Curnow all that was weak and derivative in poetry prior to the depression, and while adding caveats in the form of R. A. K. Mason and Robin Hyde he implicitly subscribed to the view that the nineteen-thirties saw an upsurge in poetic achievement (although he was wary about attributing it solely to economic hardship and was well aware of the poetic achievements of Cresswell, Mason, Hyde and Fairburn during the twenties).

More interesting than his interpretation of New Zealand's literary history was

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[254]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.17.
[255]ibid.
[256]ibid.
[257]ibid.
[258]ibid, p.21.

Curnow's development of an aesthetic of dissociation, because it was this that formed the central motivation for his cultural as well as his literary criticism. The basis of the aesthetic related to the "less tangible circumstances of our first settlements and subsequent development",[259] which Curnow asserted brought with it an emotional and intellectual malaise that settled especially heavily upon the first generations of native born New Zealanders. He felt that "[i]t must come of the struggle of those early generations to sustain their feeling of identity with England, in a country so forbiddingly different, that we have so habitually upheld the pretended against the actual".[260] Curnow set up a sense of dislocation from reality that had been ordained by historical accident, and could only be corrected through poetic insight, because "anyone capable of poetry, feeling his own land and people, his footing on the earth, to be in any way inadequate, unstable, unreal, is bound to attempt a resolution of the problems set by his birth".[261] Criticism became an attempt to effect a deeper level of interaction between the poet and his audience. In his later Penguin anthology, Curnow was even more overt in his attempt to convince New Zealanders of the "efficacy of any kind of personal speech . . ."[262] (but especially poetry) in resolving the accidents of history.

Curnow attempted to prompt a more direct interaction between New Zealanders and their cultural environment, in an attempt to move beyond the confusion associated with isolation in the South Pacific. It is interesting that Curnow prefaced his discussion of R. A. K. Mason and D'Arcy Cresswell with a passage from James Joyce. Like his use of W. B. Yeats and Matthew Arnold, the passage from Ulysses alluded to the question of nationhood while at the same time implicitly acknowledging the traditional role that Britain had in definitions of New Zealand identity. Joyce was also determinably modernist in orientation, symbolising the new world rather than the old; a factor which has suggested to some critics that Curnow found questions of identity in New Zealand that were similarly modernist in nature. Elizabeth Caffin suggests that "[i]n retrospect the importance of Curnow's 1945

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[259]ibid, p.15.
[260]ibid, p.20.
[261]ibid, p.22.
[262]Allen Curnow, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), p.63.

anthology and its introduction was not so much as a national manifesto but rather as a statement of a modernist attitude to poetry".[263] In other words, New Zealand writers like Mason and Cresswell were not linked to Joyce in any overtly poetic fashion,[264] but were instead taken to be symbolic of the dedicated artist who has "discovered in verse an object worthy of a life's devotion".[265] It was this characteristic that was important for Curnow in the development of New Zealand poetry, because it suggested to him a level of cultural maturity not present in the amateur versifiers and "lady poets" of earlier generations. Like Joyce's Ulysses the effect was heroic (and almost comical), in the modernist sense of the artist struggling against a developing modern malaise of dissociation and ennui.

The basis of Curnow's praise for Cresswell and Mason lay in a perceived lack of sentimentality, implicitly derived from their status as dedicated artists. He thought Cresswell's theme of nature lapsed into romanticism at times,[266] but his final analysis of "Lyttleton Harbour" was as "a unique document in our verse"[267] because of its ability to move beyond its locality and "become a living speech".[268] Overall, though, Curnow's assessment of Cresswell lay more in his status as an artist than in the merits of his body of work. Mason elicited much more critical praise from Curnow, who viewed him as having exerted a singular impact on New Zealand poetry.[269] In Curnow's eyes, Mason inhabited the zone between reality and dissociation, "where echoes blur all speech".[270] Comparing him to Yeats (a major influence on Curnow as a poet), he pointed out the dominance in Mason's poetry of a single subject which bound his thoughts into a coherent whole: the mystery of human existence. At all times conscious of the void between reality and unreality, Curnow favoured New Zealand poets who were able to bridge it with language, hopefully readdressing his belief that in New Zealand "[w]e are stunted emotionally because we have not dealt

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[263]Elizabeth Caffin, 'Poetry: 1945-1960', in Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, p.449.
[264]Curnow does note in the opening paragraph to his introduction that R. A. K. Mason was published in the same issue of The Chapbook as T. S. Eliot, however.
[265]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.26.
[266]ibid, p.28.
[267]ibid, p.30.
[268]ibid.
[269]ibid, p.31.
[270]ibid.

direct with life, but through intermediaries . . .".[271] Curnow's praise appeared most lavish when he was able to perceive in a poet a dogged attempt to strip away veils of cultural and emotional denial with natural speech and perseverance. The poet was meant to function (in an educative role) as a cultural lightening rod, redirecting New Zealanders' gaze back to the fundamentals of human experience.

A. R. D. Fairburn's long poem "Dominion" was discussed by Curnow in terms of the poet's "double impulse of love for, and revulsion from . . ."[272] New Zealand. Like Eric McCormick, Monte Holcroft and many other writers and critics of their generation, Fairburn had returned to New Zealand from overseas with a reinvigorated perception of his country that tended to be polarised between love and aversion. Curnow suggested that in "Dominion" the central symbol of Fairburn's transaction (New Zealand) was lacking because in positioning New Zealand against the rest of the world (attempting "to grasp in a cycle of the imagination both the New Zealander's situation and the general modern predicament of mankind . . ."[273]), Fairburn had constructed a white elephant. It was the same criticism that Monte Holcroft was charged with in more explicit terms, over his chapter in The Deepening Stream that used "Petrol Fumes" as a symbol for modernity (a parallel that reflects the difficulties faced by all New Zealand writers of this generation). It was for this reason that Curnow appreciated the poetry of Mason (and to a lesser extent Robin Hyde) that was centred on the human experience rather than New Zealand culture in particular. This appeared to assuage his overwhelming awareness of New Zealand's diminutive status. Rather than being narrowly nationalistic and idealistic, Curnow was interested in the human significance of life in New Zealand; a subject that gathers international appeal as the level of sophistication rises. It also disclosed Curnow's desire as a cultural nationalist to develop the symbol before embarking on internationalist explorations. In an interview with MacDonald P. Jackson he went so far as to suggest that "[i]f a poet can't know his country, which he has seen, what can he do about the universe, which he hasn't?"[274]

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[271] ibid, p.33.
[272] ibid, p.34.
[273] ibid, p.35.
[274] Jackson, 'Conversation With Allen Curnow', p.152.

The next section began with a quotation from McCormick's Letters and Art, and it was here that Curnow began to reassess some of the judgements proffered by McCormick in the centenary volume. In particular, he opposed McCormick's view that the thirties saw a revolution in poetry away from an earlier tradition and towards the modern poetry being practised in England during the same period. Curnow took Denis Glover as one example of a poet whose subject matter rarely centred on modern themes of the proletariat, or gave the reader the sense of an intellectual championing the working class as was the case in England at the time. Like Fairburn, Glover remained too much of a satirist and ironist for such a dedicated stance, occasioning Curnow to comment that at their worst the pair could lend "what might have been a good poem the air of a nervous joke".[275] There was a sense in this section of the importance of good criticism and the difficulty early New Zealand writers had with "journalistic critic[s]"[276] that lamented the appearance of what they saw as an ungainly attempt to be "modern". Literary critique in New Zealand is motivated in large part by attempts such as McCormick's, Holcroft's and Curnow's to redirect the discourse of New Zealand criticism towards a greater level of refinement. The effect (as seen here with McCormick and Curnow) is cumulative and to a large degree oppositional.

Curnow also rejected McCormick's belief that the depression years saw the beginnings of a more sophisticated poetic in New Zealand, suggesting that "this work (in any sense that matters), was begun years earlier . . .".[277] Like Rachel Barrowman in A Popular Vision, Curnow viewed the thirties as more indicative of a renaissance in publishing than in literature as such. Noting the presence of The Caxton Press in Christchurch and Bob Lowry's Unicorn Press in Auckland, Curnow pointed out that these ventures resulted in some verse "actually [being] called into being, because they were at hand to print it".[278] Such was the case in all areas of intellectual endeavour at the time. Rachel Barrowman recounts the development and fall of various publishing ventures in New Zealand before and during World War Two, pointing out the

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[275]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, pp.38-39.
[276]ibid, p.39.
[277]ibid.
[278]ibid, p.42.

importance of the left wing during this period. Intellectuals like W. J. Scott[279] at Wellington Teacher's Training College and H. W. Rhodes[280] at Canterbury University were instrumental in establishing an oppositional discourse that would allow more sophisticated critiques of New Zealand, concentrating on "contemporary cultural developments, the influence of 'mass' culture and the need to preserve cultural and critical standards".[281] The main overseas theories behind this small but significant intellectual renaissance were Marxist and Leavisite in origin. The left wing was instrumental in breaching the gap between academics such as Scott and Rhodes and the broader New Zealand reading public, through co-operative bookshops. The most vivid example was Walter Nash's Clarte Book Room in Wellington.[282] Like the ill fated Progressive Publishing Society that did not last long enough to publish A Book of New Zealand Verse, many of these ventures folded out of a lack of capital and patronage. War-time restrictions and harsh censorship gave at once a reason for the development of a local publishing industry, and the basis for its failure. The Caxton Press in Christchurch proved to be one of few (joined by Unicorn, Pelorus and Paul's Book Arcade) that survived to publish many New Zealand writers, Curnow included. Within this broader publishing context, Barrowman comments that Curnow's introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse represented one of the most important "manifesto[es] of cultural nationalism . . ."[283] that appeared during the nineteen-forties. Barrowman notes that "[a] glance through the *New Zealand National Bibliography* at books published in the 1930s and 1940s indicates the gap there was in New Zealand publishing at this time in the areas of social, political and economic critique and cultural literature . . .".[284] The co-operative book movement and ventures like the Progressive Publishing Society helped to redress this imbalance, but the market was never large enough to allow commercial success. The essay form of literary critique has proved to be an excellent way in which the intellectual strains of New Zealand culture could be expressed without the need for large scale publishing support.

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[279]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.122.
[280]ibid, p.39.
[281]ibid, p.122.
[282]Sinclair, Walter Nash, pp.62-63.
[283]Barrowman, A Popular Vision, p.1.
[284]ibid, p.157.

The last five sections of Curnow's introduction betrayed its central function as the introduction to an anthology. After refocusing some of the critical judgements put forward by McCormick, Curnow moved on to discuss the remaining poets in his canon through his own eyes. Curnow searched for "[t]hose points at which imagination presses most insistently . . ."[285] on New Zealand poets, and returned with symbols of nature, isolation and the sea. His understanding was not as simplistic as this, however, because in section fourteen he undercut his praise (for Ursula Bethell in particular) in a now celebrated passage:

> The idea that we are confronted by a natural time,
> a natural order, to which our presence in these
> islands is accidental, irrelevant; that we are interlopers
> on an indifferent or hostile scene; that idea, or misgiving,
> occurs so variously and so often, and in the work of
> New Zealand poets otherwise so different, that it
> suggests some common problem of the imagination.[286]

Imagination was thus of central importance to Curnow, who viewed it (once again, it must be stated that this was an essentially romantic position) as capable of redefining New Zealand culture. His task in A Book of New Zealand Verse appears to have been a reappraisal of New Zealand's poetic tradition in order to correct faulty imaginative adventures that (he felt) had no basis in reality. Curnow was referring to a common tendency to reflect on the transience of the human presence in New Zealand, a tendency raised to the level of myth in Monte Holcroft who asserted that all New Zealanders hold in common "The Memory of a Voyage"[287] made to a wild and inhospitable country at the far reaches of the earth. Curnow pointed out Holcroft's useful elaboration of this conceit,[288] but implicitly warned against its extension into dogma on the grounds that "what is admired, but does not change the imagination, has been wrongly admired".[289] In a late addition to the introduction James K. Baxter was

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[285]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.46.
[286]ibid, p.52.
[287]Holcroft, The Waiting Hills, pp.53-64.
[288]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.54.
[289]ibid.

discussed as evidence of a young poet of real talent that might arrest any such descent into an imaginatively tired aesthetic, ending the introduction on an optimistic note for the future.[290]

Curnow had betrayed a strong regional bias to his contemporaries, however. When the second edition of A Book of New Zealand Verse appeared in 1951, a critical debate that eventually spanned two decades began. Erik Schwimmer and Louis Johnson from Wellington were the main protagonists, although James K. Baxter, Keith Sinclair and Kendrick Smithyman also questioned Curnow's apparently narrowly nationalist bias.[291] It was felt that Curnow's insistence on developing New Zealand national identity was short-sighted and unresponsive to developing international trends like post-colonialism and trends towards globalisation. In the first edition of the New Zealand Poetry Yearbook[292] Erik Schwimmer argued that Curnow's emphasis on a peculiarly New Zealand experience was in effect only a myth of "a lonely island-desert, discovered by navigators and developed by baffled explorers . . ."[293] that was basically Holcroftian in origin and out of touch with main stream New Zealand which was becoming increasingly oriented towards the emerging internationalist culture. It was largely upon these lines that the debate was ranged over the next decades, with nationalists opposing internationalists and vice-versa. Curnow's response to Schwimmer in the same year defended himself in rather explicit terms as a maker of myths, but this did nothing to halt the escalation of the debate. His point was that the argument was "at cross-purposes, between Mr Schwimmer's contemporaries and the windmill-giant of a myth, which is no more threatening than they choose to make it".[294]

Noel Hilliard criticised A Book of New Zealand Verse the following year on grounds that have since been left largely unrecognised, although his basic point is

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[290]ibid, pp.54-55.
[291]Caffin, 'Romantics and Modernists', pp.447-448.
[292]Erik Schwimmer, 'Commentary', in Louis Johnson, ed., New Zealand Poetry Yearbook 1951 (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1951), pp.65-70.
[293]ibid, p.65.
[294]Allen Curnow, 'The New Zealand Poetry Yearbook', in Curnow, Look Back Harder, p.108.

telling. Hilliard criticised the anthology as a "[l]ily-white"[295] construction by a Pakeha male that totally excluded the Maori viewpoint; only mentioning the word "Maori" six times, and only once in a vital context. Despite Curnow's acceptance of Holcroft's exhortation to "acclimatise the muse",[296] he had all but ignored the most developed vein of culture and identity present in New Zealand. Sheer lack of material was probably the main issue, because Maori poets writing and publishing in English were not to be found in New Zealand until the nineteen-sixties. Curnow's orientation in this sense always lay towards Polynesia in general rather than the Maori whom he tended to simply view as fellow sea travellers (like all the people of the Pacific).[297] Hilliard failed to recognise that Curnow's exclusion of an exclusively Maori viewpoint reflected what he believed to be trifling attempts to assimilate Maori into Pakeha culture (symbolised most forcefully in Kowhai Gold).

Much more effective as a criticism of Curnow's introduction was Kendrick Smithyman's analysis of his critical method in A Way of Saying (1965). Smithyman objected to the way A Book of New Zealand Verse was regional in character (as opposed to global), and felt that Curnow's critical method contributed to this bias through its emphasis on the "reality"[298] prior to the poem. Smithyman suggested that Curnow's two critical principles could be categorised as:

> 1] Respect the text, "His business as poet or critic is to judge in general terms of poetics, not to ordain the terms".
> 2] Reality, or "the recovery of reality as immediacy . . .".[299]

Smithyman then went on to point out that the terms of Curnow's method were essentially contradictory, on the grounds that "the tenets of the view cannot in fact be made to discriminate specialized and localized experiences from those which are

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[295]Noel Hilliard, 'New Zealand's Jim Crow Versebook', Here & Now (November 1952), p.30.
[296]M. H. Holcroft, cited in, Hilliard, 'New Zealand's Jim Crow Versebook', p.30.
[297]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.47.
[298]Smithyman, A Way of Saying, p.40.
[299]ibid, p.40.

generalized . . .".[300] This was a telling criticism, and harked back to Bill Pearson and D. M. Anderson's criticism of Holcroft along the lines of his conflation of materialist and idealist positions.[301] Indeed Smithyman linked Holcroft and Curnow closely, and criticised them specifically on this point. Curnow defended himself on obvious grounds in a later interview when he noted that "[i]f a poet can't know his country, which he has seen, what can he do about the universe, which he hasn't?"[302] He defended his method and stance on the basis that New Zealand was an undefined entity, the nature of which could not be side-stepped simply through the enlistment of internationalist principles. Whether illusory or not, the reality outlined in his introduction to A Book of New Zealand Verse was designed to provide the basis for the future development of New Zealand literature, not the elaboration of a new cultural hegemony.

A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945 occupies two distinct planes of New Zealand's literary and cultural history. Firstly, it was the earliest anthology of New Zealand poetry that was of sufficient quality to exercise any real influence over other poets. The one hundred and thirty or so poets of Alexander and Currie's Treasury of New Zealand Verse (1926) and Quentin Pope's Kowhai Gold (1930) were of little use to local poets attempting to develop their art due simply to their sheer inclusiveness, leading many New Zealand poets to bewail the lack of critical standards that might raise the quality of New Zealand literature in general. A Book of New Zealand Verse was an attempt to define the critical standards used in developing a local poetic, including only those poets that merited inclusion within the more refined canon of New Zealand poetry. Curnow saw himself as extending the "more exacting criticism . . ."[303] established earlier in the decade by McCormick and Holcroft into the realm of poetry, which was generally seen as the most developed of the literary forms. W. H. Oliver has suggested that Curnow's introduction "joined McCormick's survey and Holcroft's essay as a foundation document in literary criticism".[304] In many ways Curnow's anthology provided the final element in an initial canon and aesthetic of

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[300]ibid, p.41.
[301]See p.107.
[302]Jackson, 'Conversation With Allen Curnow', p.152.
[303]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.14.
[304]Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination', p.542.

New Zealand literature; whereas McCormick had adumbrated a prose canon, and Holcroft a formative aesthetic, Curnow put forward a poetic canon within the discourse of an "acclimatised" cultural nationalism.[305]

It is as a manifesto of cultural nationalism that A Book of New Zealand Verse asserts its secondary position, although this element is inextricably tied to its inherently poetic orientation. Curnow's anthology effectively refused the apron-strings of Empire, it refused to rely upon an organicist conception of New Zealand culture that could only stunt the growth of a local identity, by continually outlining its derivative nature at the expense of local aesthetic development. John Geraets defined this link eloquently when he noted that:

> Curnow's anthology signals a discontinuity between itself and all that precedes it; poetry is uplifted from the site it had occupied prior to 1945 in a movement that releases it from its former dependence upon England as the very source and origin out of which literary and social possibility in New Zealand arose.[306]

Geraets goes on to note the appearance of Curnow as a "poet-anthologist"[307] who used his Horatian authority to invert the terminology of cultural relations, turning England from an exalted fount of cultural sophistication into a relic, an "enfeebling, denatured"[308] zone whose influence in poetry could lead only to the flatulent romantic verse contained in earlier anthologies. In establishing a canon of New Zealand poetry Curnow made a parallel reorientation in what had been basic cultural assumptions since the advent of colonisation. Much of the criticism of A Book of New Zealand Verse stems from the very power of this cultural inversion. Geraets likened the action to the creation of a mirror that inverts the past but simultaneously casts its distorted

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[305]W. H. Oliver and others have been quite correct in their identification of McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow as a critical triumvirate, but for various reasons (related, I suspect to matters of cultural essentialism) the issue has not been taken any further.
[306]Geraets, 'The New Zealand Anthology', p.66.
[307]ibid.
[308]ibid, p.67.

image into the future, meaning that "not only does society get reflected in the mirror that is poetry, but the reversal effected gives to that reflection the status of reality".[309] In this manner it is argued that Curnow's introduction has cast too long a shadow over New Zealand literary and cultural theory, that it simply replaced the illusion represented in Kowhai Gold and A Treasury of New Zealand Verse with a more purely nationalistic version. It is characteristic of Curnow's sophistication that such arguments have tended to collapse at a certain point on the basis of his status as a "maker of plots".[310] Indeed, it is difficult to ascertain just how conscious he was of himself as the creator of a new cultural myth, because he has typically been reticent in explaining his intentions. This, of course, has only heightened the critical debate on the subject. The only conclusion to be drawn is that he was a master of not only poetry, but self-promotion. Arnold, Eliot, Leavis and Trilling were likewise skilled in this particular art.

Curnow was acting (to use his own words) as a "prophet to his people . . .".[311] Several times Curnow's introduction referred to the poet as a cultural seer, with Curnow claiming that "the poet is as the nerve to the body of his race . . .",[312] but underlying this again were the basic literary and cultural aesthetics put forward in Letters and Art and The Deepening Stream. Davis and Schleifer suggest the power of the form that results from a combination of these three perspectives by commenting that "[s]uch cultural critique . . . inhabits literary studies in the twentieth century when it is most powerful - when it situates literature as a *cultural* phenomenon which calls for the terrible learning of critique".[313] In considering the three foundation texts of literary critique in New Zealand as a tradition, it becomes apparent that the *form* of the writing itself (rather than solely an artistic skill in the creation of artifice) confers much of the cultural force. The fusion of the essay form with literary critique provides a powerful vehicle for imaginative expression, allowing not only critical but personal opinions to be professed. Curnow's acknowledged debt to McCormick and Holcroft

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[309]ibid, p.69.
[310]Wieland, 'Reality's Adam', p.386.
[311]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.22.
[312]ibid, p.46.
[313]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, pp.2-3 (Davis and Schleifer's emphasis).

suggests that he too was aware of what he had been recently bequeathed.

The gender bias of literary critique demands examination here, because not only was the critical triumvirate male, but virtually all the other practioners of the mode (until 1995) were also male. A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-1945 contained sixteen poets: Arnold Wall, Ursula Bethell, J. R. Hervey, Walter D'Arcy Cresswell, J. C. Beaglehole, A. R. D. Fairburn, R. A. K. Mason, Robin Hyde, Charles Brasch, Basil Dowling, Allen Curnow, Denis Glover, Douglas Stewart, Anton Vogt, Hubert Witherford and James K. Baxter. The gender bias in favour of male poets is instantly recognisable: only two of the sixteen were women. Yet, this "preponderance of university trained and teaching Pakeha men in such writing is of course largely predictable and as such not in any significant sense in itself discrediting. At the same time, it may not unreasonably be felt that the claims made on behalf of literature function jointly to empower and preserve the interests of those involved and the terms of the project undertaken".[314] The issue is in this sense historical rather than political.

Female poets have attracted a great deal of scorn in New Zealand literature over the years for an apparently amateurish approach.[315] This gender bias was present throughout the history of literary critique in general until 1995, when Michele Leggott used the form to pointedly attack such inconsistencies in canon formation.[316] It can only be noted that Curnow's comments did at times betray a tone of discrimination that was present throughout literary circles (and society) in general in the post-war years and beyond. While he described the verse of Eileen Duggan and Robin Hyde as having tendencies towards "sentimental posturing"[317], the poetry of D'Arcy Cresswell and R. A. K. Mason was described as being small in quantity but of extreme importance to New Zealand literature - to the extent that "to belittle their achievement would be to deny New Zealanders the possibility, not of 'nationhood', but of manhood itself".[318] This was especially true of Curnow's introduction if it is accepted

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[314]John Geraets, 'Reluctant Campers?: Compiling New Zealand Literary Culture', Span 39 (October 1994), p.75.
[315]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.21.
[316]Leggott, 'Opening the Archive'.
[317]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.24.
[318]ibid, p.27.

that it effectively assumes power over the poems to follow, immersing them in his words and legitimising them as canonical on the basis of his own (necessarily biased) perspective.[319] In terms of literary critique such relationships of power tend to be heightened by their coalescence into one tradition, an act which exposes not only the prevalence of gender and cultural biases, but their inherently cliquish nature. Such inter-connections between the three foundation texts were made explicit by Curnow himself in 1945, when he noted that: "the introduction, for what it is worth, would have been impossible if Holcroft hadn't written his essays, and McCormick his *Letters and Art . . .*".[320] It would be anachronistic to judge Curnow as sexist, however. Letters and Art in New Zealand, The Deepening Stream and A Book of New Zealand Verse have wielded a tremendous amount of cultural power in New Zealand, but it has been a power that reflects imbalances in wider society. The fact is that Curnow had struck a chord not only in compiling the anthology, but in his introductory critique he seemed to "have discovered New Zealand in time and place".[321] The Caxton anthology sold exceptionally well, and was reprinted in a new expanded addition in 1951. Such was the success of the Caxton editions that Penguin Books hired Curnow to publish a revised Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse in 1960.

Although accepted as a critical and literary-historical landmark, there were rumblings of discontent as early as March of 1945, however, in relation to exactly the kind of mythic hegemony that interested later critics. R. Seymour, in a review in New Zealand New Writing (published by the Wellington based Progressive Publishing Company), objected to a "tendency among some of our present writers, in particular M. H. Holcroft, Allen Curnow and E. H. McCormick, to romanticise the position of the New Zealander in time and place".[322] Seymour was referring to the use of metaphors of oceans, exile and a nation "not in narrow seas"[323] that was created out of the three writers' forays into literary critique. Coupled together (and associated with the South Island Myth in later decades), McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow came to

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[319]Geraets, 'The New Zealand Anthology', p.71.
[320]Curnow, 'A Dialogue With Ngaio Marsh', p.80.
[321]Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', p.332.
[322]R. Seymour, 'A Present Tendency in New Zealand Literature', in I. A. Gordon, ed., New Zealand New Writing 4 (March 1945), p.31.
[323]Curnow, Not in Narrow Seas.

be viewed as the central triumvirate of a narrowly defined cultural nationalism. They were also, however, the central triumvirate of literary critique. By 1945 literary critique had evolved into a mode of literature that identified and examined New Zealand's literary tradition; exalted that literature as a necessary adjunct to cultural redefinition; posited moral questions that arose from the literature; engaged with cultural theory; adopted an educative, didactic position; attempted to raise criticism to the status of art; and (not least) bound these aspects together with a strain of personalism that asserted the right (and, indeed, duty) of the artist to critique his culture and point out its possibilities, failings and future direction. The next phase in the development of literary critique in New Zealand from 1945-1970 was to see both a development of McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow's ideas and a splintering of opinion over what new directions to take.

Chapter Three: 'The Splintering of Opinion 1945-1970'

Figure 3

"Up Himself"

The period from the publication of Curnow's A Book of New Zealand Verse in 1945 to the next literary critique written in New Zealand in 1953 was a relatively lifeless phase in New Zealand literature. Despite the end of the war, New Zealand society remained under rationing restrictions, and much of society was geared towards reintegrating returned servicemen and attempting to re-establish a level of normalcy. In the artistic infrastructure there were developments, with the establishment of a State Literary Fund (1947) to help aspiring writers and send established ones overseas (and the foundation of a symphony orchestra). From the governmental level these initiatives represented a formative attempt to develop an infrastructure that could help foster the arts, as an extension of the 1940 centennial celebrations. Although adequate, it should be noted that in real terms it was "remarkable only in the context of the barrenness that preceded [it]".[1] Private initiatives made much more lasting and considerable contributions in the context, especially in the establishment of the literary periodical Landfall (1947) through the private estate of Charles Brasch. Here and Now followed in 1949 as a journal of politics, literature, art and public affairs in

[1]Oliver, 'The Awakening Imagination 1940-1980', p.541.

another basically private initiative that set in motion a trend of periodical publication that could help writers get published and develop criticism as a serious component in the national literature.[2] A lecture given by Charles Brasch at Dunedin University in 1950 titled "Conditions for Literature"[3] reflected the general feeling of many writers and artists at the time that New Zealand culture was not yet sufficiently sophisticated to support a truly independent literature. The immediate post-war period saw an upsurge in activity aimed at developing an infrastructure that could nurture and sustain such an enterprise.

Arthur Marwick suggests that British society during the post-war years also went through a kind of intellectual "revivification"[4] based around a New Left that put forward critiques "of the soullessness and standardization involved in mass technological society".[5] In this period, countries across the world saw the development of counter-culture ideals that began to examine the effects of economic and social issues that had apparently been brought on by post-war affluence and a decline in standards of conservative morality. The war had raised serious questions as to the right of the conservative majority to dictate cultural norms, and many writers and critics began to appeal to the popular minorities (such as students) in an effort to redirect the terms of social protest. In this environment, writers, musicians and working class youths began to voice concern over their affluent societies and the ways in which they disenfranchised those with most to say. American culture began to assert its presence more heavily through Hollywood films and other popular artforms, and the socially liminal rebel came to prominence as a symbol of cultural redefinition.[6] The fifties have been described as "The Angry Decade", predicated upon arguments concerning the irrelevance of social class, the failure of the affluent

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[2]Dennis McEldowney, 'Publishing, Patronage, Literary Magazines', in Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, p.669.
[3]Charles Brasch, 'Conditions for Literature', in Charles Brasch, The Universal Dance: A Selection From the Critical Writings of Charles Brasch, ed. J. L. Watson (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1981), pp.145-165.
[4]Arthur Marwick, British Society Since 1945 (London: Allen Lane, 1982), p.125.
[5]ibid.
[6]Neil Nehring, Flowers in the Dustbin: Culture, Anarchy, and Postwar England (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp.177ff.

society, the dangers of ideology and the insidious power-plays of the status-quo.[7] While New Zealand certainly avoided much of the cultural upheaval associated with post-war Britain and America, the basic ideas associated with the period in those countries did find their way to New Zealand.

The authors to be examined in this chapter - Robert Chapman, James K. Baxter, Kendrick Smithyman, and Bill Pearson - focused their critiques on the immediate situation of New Zealand literature in overt attempts to recontextualise the terms of debate established by McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow. The provincial stance was identified and new techniques were imported from overseas to refocus attention on the social and urban settings. Of these techniques the most radical was the New Criticism; a formalist approach to the issue of literary criticism that presupposed a radical break between a text and its historical and social environment. Of New Zealand critics, Kendrick Smithyman was the only one to espouse such a radically formalist position. Robert Chapman and Bill Pearson each took a less extreme position that willingly utilised history and sociology in critical analysis. James K. Baxter was more likely to employ psychological theories that were capable of isolating symbolic and mythic elements in New Zealand's literary culture. Essentially, therefore, the period 1945 to 1970 signified a splintering of opinion over what constituted New Zealand literature and culture. The period was dominated by writers closely involved with the expansion of New Zealand's university system during the nineteen-sixties and closed as the first students of that system reached maturity during the nineteen-seventies.

Letters and Art in New Zealand, The Deepening Stream and A Book of New Zealand Verse were published in book form, but periodical production remained essential to the development of both literary critique and New Zealand literature generally, because it lent a cheap and easily accessible form of publication and a regular forum for critical discussions of New Zealand literature. The format and function of these "little magazines"[8] was also significant to the broader development of literary critique in New Zealand. Little magazines are frequently funded by a small

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[7]ibid, pp.182-189.

[8]Edward Bishop, 'Re:Covering Modernism - Format and Function in the Little Magazines', in Ian Willison et al., eds, Modernist Writers and the Marketplace (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996), p.287.

group of supporters who wish to see work published that would not otherwise appear. They also tend to take an adversarial stance in relation to the broader culture, indeed they rely on a certain level of antagonism to survive, because it provides them with a marketing edge over more established magazines.[9] The earliest example of literary critique after World War Two reflected the importance of little magazines to the development of New Zealand's national literature. Robert Chapman's "Fiction and the Social Pattern: Some Implications of Recent New Zealand Writing" (1953)[10] was published in Landfall eight years after the publication of A Book of New Zealand Verse by Caxton Press. The essay not only suggested the new importance of little magazines in the dissemination of literary thought, but the start of a trend towards a re-evaluation of the insights proffered by the likes of McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow.

i] Robert Chapman, Fiction and the Social Pattern: Some Implications of Recent New Zealand Writing, 1953.

Published in Landfall during 1953, Chapman's essay has been "widely regarded as a seminal work on New Zealand literature and society",[11] establishing the author as an important commentator on New Zealand society and politics. The essay was an extended version of an address delivered to the New Zealand University Student's Association Congress in January 1952. Chapman was born in 1922 and trained as a historian at the University of New Zealand, gaining an M.A. and teaching New Zealand and American twentieth century history[12] before eventually becoming a professor of political studies at the University of Auckland.[13] The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature cites F. R. Leavis as a major critical influence on Chapman, especially in his belief that fiction writers should aim to highlight aspects

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[9]ibid.
[10]Robert Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern: Some Implications of Recent New Zealand Writing', Landfall 25 (1953), pp.26-58.
[11]Elizabeth McLeay, 'Introduction', in Elizabeth McLeay, ed, New Zealand Politics and Social Patterns: Selected Works by Robert Chapman (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999), p.8.
[12]ibid, p.1.
[13]Heather Murray, 'Robert Chapman', in Robinson and Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p.100.

of society that lead to the destruction of human life and values.[14] The stance was highly didactic, in that it aimed to use the criticism of literature to alter opinions towards human existence, by highlighting the social comments made by authors on their society. It was this Leavisite position that lent literary critique its role as arbiter of cultural truths, and designated the literary critic as social and cultural commentator. As was the case with Leavisite thinking, Chapman's work tended to be highly interdisciplinary, using history, political science and psychology as a base for a wide ranging view of New Zealand society that linked personal and group experience, the micro and the macro, in an effort to delineate the pattern of society in New Zealand.[15] In broader international terms, Chapman must be seen as part of that movement of critics who developed a "critique of modernity . . ."[16] that began a trend towards purely *cultural* criticism focused upon "investigations into contemporary states of mind . . .".[17] Later mid-century critics like Lionel Trilling engaged in similar criticism. Chapman was an important proponent of literary critique, because he had experienced first-hand the implications of being an intellectual in New Zealand and used his position as an academic to point out the difficulties and prejudices faced by creative people in his country. Perhaps the most obvious marker of "Fiction and the Social Pattern" as an example of literary critique, however, was Chapman's steadfastly moralistic tone, implicitly chastising his readers for a false morality based on outmoded precepts. "Fiction and the Social Pattern" was at once didactic, moralistic and antagonistic.

In "Fiction and the Social Pattern" Chapman presented what can be seen as the most forceful example of literary critique produced in New Zealand, but it also indicated how the mode can over-stretch its claims to (scholastic) legitimacy. In particular, Chapman's essay put forward a specific and convincing account of New Zealand's social patterns but used evidence to justify the position based in the main on literary accounts that can lay no substantive claims to Cartesian precision. The point is that the essay did not gain its forcefulness through strict adherence to an

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[14]ibid.
[15]Chapman, New Zealand Politics and Social Patterns, p.5.
[16]Vincent Sherry, 'Wyndham Lewis', in Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, p.139.
[17]ibid, p.138.

empirical methodology but in Chapman's ability as an essayist. Although the author may have been unaware of it, "Fiction and the Social Pattern" effectively utilised New Zealanders' preference for empirically based knowledge to push his claims for a greater appreciation of the role of the artist. "Fiction and the Social Pattern" indicated how literary critique is a mode of writing with essentially emotive and psychological, rather than scholastic, significance. This is because the essay used literary and psychological insights as evidence of a sociological condition (it should be remembered that the mode is imaginative and creative rather than academically rigorous). While many (if not most) of Chapman's insights suggested an intimate understanding of New Zealand society and culture, the essay betrayed literary critique at its most contentious: it is a powerful and penetrating literary form that in the final instance lacks methodological rigour when applied outside the realms of literary history and criticism.

It is necessary to pause at this point to examine the question that "Fiction and the Social Pattern" (and literary critique itself) constantly begs; "The Meaning of a Literary Idea".[18] Chapman appeared to accept (like Lionel Trilling) that there is undeviating continuity between literature and the social, historical and philosophical ideas that we use to interpret the world. This places Chapman in a literary-critical tradition stemming directly from Leavis and American critics like Trilling. These modernist and social critics were generally opposed to the New Critics like Ransom, Tate and Warren who (with important caveats) denied the usefulness of such associations. As this chapter unfolds, the distinctions will become more apparent, but suffice to say at present that in New Zealand from 1945 to 1970 two distinct camps can be discerned, with Chapman and Pearson generally agreeing with the position held by Leavis and Trilling, and Smithyman asserting the New Criticism of Tate and Warren. James K. Baxter held a more idiosyncratic position that was similar in some respects to T. S. Eliot's. Practitioners of literary critique in New Zealand between 1945 and 1970 can therefore be organised into two opposing camps of modernists and New Critics just as has been done on the international scene.[19] Such demarcations

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[18]Lionel Trilling, 'The Meaning of a Literary Idea', in Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, pp.281-303.
[19]Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism.

require extrapolation and nuanced interpretation to function without becoming prescriptive, but generally the classification is a useful one.

Chapman's thesis was strong, derived from his perception of the writer's position in a new and socially limited country. His began his argument with the idea of stereotypes, and the necessity of a post-colonial writer to define received stereotypes anew:

> Stereotypes are not wholly wrong but rather the highest common factor of general observation in a stable pattern. Where the pattern has not been stable for long enough nor been sufficiently stratified and geographically various to provide a variety of stereotypes, the consequence for the serious writer is that he cannot touch in any of his characters lightly or make them begin to live by showing one or two exactly observed departures from the expected norm. Each character must be handwrought; the author cannot take character roughcast from the mould and file to taste.[20]

Literary commentators have accurately suggested that "Fiction and the Social Pattern" identified a cult of realism in New Zealand literature that lasted almost two decades, instigated by Frank Sargeson in his short stories.[21] This is a legitimate observation, and Mark Williams[22] has identified the central issue that Chapman lighted upon, namely, the absence of "widely recognized psychological stereotypes".[23] Chapman not only argued that New Zealand culture had not yet developed enough to provide adequate stereotypes, but that New Zealand writers were "remarkably alike in their technical methods and in their subject matter . . ."[24] as a direct result of this undeveloped pattern. This in turn led to a dependence on the American Realist style of writing that tended to take characters directly from the world around them without (necessarily) extrapolating them into stories archetypal to the human condition.

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[20]Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern', p.30.
[21]Murray, 'Robert Chapman', p.100.
[22]Williams, 'Literary Scholarship', p.715.
[23]Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern', p.30.
[24]ibid, p.31.

Realism, and a narrow interpretation of social reality, thus came to be seen as the beginning and end of literary endeavour in prose writing. Chapman pointed out that this attitude was a blind alley and far too sympathetic to the New Zealand audience, which had difficulty appreciating more sensitive and nuanced prose.

After pointing out a fundamental characteristic of New Zealand writing and relating it to the broader social pattern, Chapman then proceeded to define that pattern through recourse to history, and later New Zealand literature itself. The central process behind literary critique exposed itself here in that although Chapman's social pattern was constructed through reference to historical sources, it was frequently evidenced through recourse to literary examples. Chapman forthrightly set out his modus operandi in a passage that revealed a lot about the authorial stance adopted by most practitioners of literary critique:

> But the critic is at liberty and it is his function to give an analysis of cause and effect and thus to tie up the phenomena selected by one or several authors. So the critic provides a background for the stories which he has to examine and makes it possible for the bold relief of the stories to be set against his sketch map of the society. What follows does not pretend to have been arrived at with the help of the full apparatus of the academic sociologies.[25]

Chapman was fully aware that "Fiction and the Social Pattern" was a highly creative, imaginative offering and presented his approach early in the essay in order to deflect exactly this criticism.

Chapman began his sketch of the New Zealand social pattern "at the point where the outlook of New Zealanders was imported",[26] as an outgrowth of the British social pattern that was transported to New Zealand along with the first settlers. "It was as old as Great Britain when it arrived".[27] Taking the key years of settlement to be between

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[25]ibid, p.33.
[26]ibid.
[27]ibid.

1861 and 1881[28] Chapman argued that New Zealand's social pattern was formed out of the industrial revolution of Victorian England, which created pressures on the working class that prompted them to immigrate to the colonies, bringing with them Victorian values based on hard work and thrift underlined with a rigid puritan religious code.[29] In this initial historical overview, Chapman quoted sources from Elsie Locke and social historians such as G. D. H. Cole[30] in a manner that adequately provided a background to his subject matter, despite the fact that some of his generalisations (especially the importance and centralisation of the Wakefieldian settlements) beg to be interrogated.[31] Of more significance to his general thesis was his interesting account of the religious component of the pattern that arrived with the settlers and was then secularised to ever increasing degrees until the Church itself was largely phased out:

> The outlook and the moral scheme [of the Victorian evangelicals] were not lost in the cabins and holds of the emigrant ships coming to New Zealand. They travelled better in the habits and attitudes of the immigrants than the Churches could with their buildings, halls, schools, hospitals and vicarages. The Churches which had been associated with the elaboration of the puritan pattern tended increasingly over the decades to be left out.[32]

The central message of the Church, "[w]ork, deny yourself and you will be prosperous and saved . . ."[33] was axiomatic in the early years of settlement, because those that worked hard generally did prosper. With little spare time at their disposal and virtually endless possibilities for material advancement, the New Zealand religious pattern was secularised and the Victorian proposition of hard work and sacrifice became dogma, borne out in the success of families who had gained a

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[28]ibid.
[29]ibid, pp.34-36.
[30]ibid, p.34.
[31]See: Miles Fairburn, The Ideal Society and Its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900 (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989).
[32]Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern', p.36.
[33]ibid.

reasonable level of comfort after battling the bush. Patriarchal success followed and families continued to impress upon the young the notion that endless success was possible with appropriate physical sacrifice. Chapman was clearly affronted by his society's blindness to their mode of puritanism, that disguised itself as secular and modern while being predicated upon Victorian practices of self-denial and repression of the emotive faculties. In Chapman's thesis such an outlook was destined to fail, because immigrant numbers soon swelled to the point where future expansion was impossible. Social stratification was inevitable as the new immigrants found it increasingly difficult to buy land and many were relegated to wage-earning status once more. The implication was that a purely egalitarian society had proven to be a chimera.

It was at this point of his argument that Chapman introduced a pivotal element to his study of the New Zealand pattern, namely, the replacement of a patriarchal pattern by a matriarchal one. As opportunities for expansion became limited, Chapman argued, the male patriarchal figure became compromised. Economic conditions forced him to settle down and accept the drudgery of mortgage repayments and a life of subservience to his employers. Father could no longer expect to rise through hard work; he would be as well off at 25 as he was at 50 and "[t]he exact grade the family would occupy was fixed increasingly by mother's skill in spending to the greatest advantage a nearly fixed income".[34] And yet the pattern remained. Herein lay what Chapman perceived to be the central contradiction (even hypocrisy) of New Zealand society. Although the male remained patriarchal head of the family, life ran contrary to the facts because it was mother who held the purse-strings and was responsible for the family's social status. This false patriarchy was perpetuated through mother's indoctrination of the children with the secularised Victorian values of thrift, duty and hard work; values that in time came to be augmented with a strongly material bias that acted as visual verification of the family's social status. The end had usurped the means. "Instead of being re-examined, the pattern, the code and the morality were aided to carry on, as rigid as the law, like the hypertrophied superego as pictured by Freud and just as unconscious".[35]

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[34]ibid, p.38.
[35]ibid, p.40.

In line with the central focus of literary critique, Chapman cited some examples of New Zealand writing to illustrate his position, suggesting that A. P. Gaskell's collection of stories The Big Game and Sargeson's short story "The Hole That Jack Dug" were especially evocative of the position that New Zealand males found themselves in. Chapman viewed the central problem for New Zealand males in relation to his description of the social pattern, in that although the pattern insisted upon particular male attributes such as toughness and manliness, it provided no outlets for them, leading men to express themselves through what soon became central social institutions of the pattern. The R. S. A., Rotary Clubs, Masonic Lodges and the local pub were seen by Chapman to be areas where men could express the qualities expected of them by society outside the matriarchal influence of the home. Swearing, drinking and gambling were off limits around the home and family, but in these bastions of male influence they could be indulged without any attendant social stigma. In the same manner, war became a supreme symbol of male freedom because it was "a release from frustration and a reaffirmation of the New Zealand man's picture of himself in the face of social contradictions in civilian life".[36] This isolation of male experience from the normal pattern of social life led in turn to a lifelong separation of the sexes and a resultant tendency towards latent homosexuality because men had no conception of a proper interaction between genders. Chapman put forward a vision of the New Zealand social pattern as inherently inadequate, resulting in a polarisation of the sexes and an emotional incapacity in its inhabitants that had far reaching consequences. His vision was completed with an outline of the functioning of the pattern from childhood to adulthood that suggested a circular mechanism of indoctrination, rebellion and ultimately a reassertion of the pattern and the development of a new cycle.

Chapman suggested that writers could break the pattern, highlighting its inadequacies and suggesting new ways of ordering social and cultural interaction.[37] Authors of literary critique always gave writers (and artists in general) an important role in New Zealand society. In line with their romantic and post-romantic forebears, they viewed artistic endeavour as the chief means by which New Zealand culture

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[36]ibid, p.41.
[37]ibid, p.54

could be imaginatively redefined.

In explaining the pivotal disruptive element in the pattern, Chapman relied on literary excerpts and anecdotal evidence, binding his argument that began in a socio-historical mode with artistic and personal insights. This led to an interesting blending of academic directness and personal embellishment to force his point. Chapman first cited historical and sociological evidence (in the development of his pattern out of the Victorian settlement of New Zealand from the eighteen-sixties) which was cogent and methodologically sound. He suggested that the pattern he identified in the early phases of the essay functioned in a circular manner, in a process that began with childhood indoctrination before moving into a phase of adolescent rebellion and finally into adulthood where the pattern was reimposed[38]. Census figures were used to illustrate rates of marriage and birth rates that backed up his impressions with statistical data.[39] Chapman wrote that the period of adolescent rebellion functioned as a "shock-absorber"[40] in the pattern that allowed 15 to 18 year olds a period of freedom from puritan restraints as they explored their developing sexuality and tested the limits imposed by wider society. The normal termination of this period of rebellion occurred with marriage and a return to the adult mode of the pattern as a lack of money and opportunity coupled with a lack of proper understanding of gender roles forced the young adults back into the cycle of repression. In this sense Chapman pointed out that the period of adolescent rebellion was ironically a period where the pattern was strengthened, as the brief freedom allowed was later undermined and in fact reimposed by the new parents on their children:

> Had the parents not rebelled themselves and been drawn back to an adherence to those fictions by what they took to be the 'facts of life' they might not be so keen to protect children from rebellion or deviation by insisting on the fictions. Insisting on the fictions removes the need for the parents to dig into their

[38]ibid, pp.43-53.
[39]ibid, pp.47-48.
[40]ibid, p.46.

> own well-buried difficulties, regarded now as past failure and felt as present discontent. So to protect themselves, and, as they hope, their children, parents continue to insist on what will prevent examination and discussion. They confine themselves, usually, to worry and to one of the many variations on the theme summed up in the phrase 'you'll learn'.[41]

Chapman's pattern represented a generational cycle that insidiously worked within society to indoctrinate the population with inadequate notions of selfhood and morality. There was a strong sense that Chapman wrote from personal experience. After developing the patterns' framework in this manner, the author went on to back up his assertions through recourse to New Zealand literary history.

Returning to Chapman's similarities with Trilling and other socially minded critics, we can ultimately define the post-romantic, or social, attitude to literature and ideas as being predicated on a belief that in order to prove the obvious and useful relationship between literature and ideas

> All that we need to do is account for a certain aesthetic effect as being in some important part achieved by a process which is not different from the process by which discursive ideas are conceived, and which is to be judged by some of the criteria by which an idea is judged.[42]

Or as Graham Good has suggested:

> the ideas in an essay are arranged aesthetically, forming a pattern of relationships rather than a straight line of necessary

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[41]ibid, p.44.
[42]Trilling, 'The Meaning of a Literary Idea', p.297.

consequences; its ideas need not *follow* in the logical sense.[43]

"Fiction and the Social Pattern" was a forceful account of New Zealand society that utilised this very logic. Chapman developed a pattern of relationships between socio-historical, statistical and anecdotal evidence that served his purposes well, but his adumbration of instances did not necessarily follow in a strictly logical sense. Indeed, the essay form itself does not actually require strictly empirical reasoning. Chapman himself was well aware of this when he pointed out that "[w]hat follows does not pretend to have been arrived at with the the help of the full apparatus of the academic sociologies".[44]

Chapman openly pointed out at the start of the essay that his modus operandi was to uncover the pattern behind New Zealand fiction; to provide a background that would enable the "bold relief of the stories to be set against his sketch map of the society".[45] The notion that his pattern might be used as a base for sociological studies of New Zealand society was purely secondary. Despite his motivation being literary in origin, the knowledge thus gained had a tone of sociological accuracy. Literary examples interacted with Chapman's pattern in such a way as to solidify it into a truth claim, with fictive evidence acting to twist the tone of the essay towards *non*-fiction. This is the protean nature of literary critique in stark relief. Discussing the period of rebellion that formed the "shock-absorber"[46] in his system Chapman cited a passage from Dan Davin's novel Cliffs of Fall where the central protagonist, Mark, engaged in a soliloquy over the problems of mentioning any element of sexuality with his parents. Chapman then explained how the passage highlighted the tendency (of the pattern) to suppress the development of adequate sexual knowledge, moving from a purely fictive account to a statement on the problems encountered by New Zealand adolescents in wider society. The shift from the fictive to non-fictive was subtle and extremely effective in implying a direct correlation between literature and reality:

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[43]Good, The Observing Self (Good's emphasis), p.19.
[44]Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern', p.33.
[45]ibid.
[46]ibid, p.46.

> Mark launched his rebellion, in his first independence as a lodger, by absorbing the spread of other ideas provided by the university and by attacking through Bohemian party-going and some promiscuous experimentation with sex 'the manners and morals their grandparents had brought with them from Scotland'. For the non-university majority the weekly dance, party-going, and occasional sexual experiment are accompanied by less theory and hardly any chance that a theory may lead on to understanding which might emancipate them from the compulsion of patterned action and reaction.[47]

In this quotation (albeit extracted) the reader could be forgiven for thinking that "Mark" was a real person. Chapman's essay *was* non-fiction, but only in that "[t]he essayist implies that his representations *are* literally true *within the terms of his relationship to his reader*".[48] Because Chapman openly stated his modus operandi in writing "Fiction and the Social Pattern" during the early paragraphs of the essay (thereby defining the nature of his relationship to the reader) he was free to develop the work in aesthetic terms, utilising the protean qualities of the essay form to confer a startling level of force to his argument. Outside the strictures of the academic disciplines there was no need for Chapman to fit himself into a tradition of scholarship that might constrain *any* implications suggested by his imposition of a pattern onto New Zealand society, and literature provided him with the most suggestive of all implications, be they sexual, psychological, economic, demographic or otherwise. Literary critique allows the author to define the limits of their argument, and therein develop a thesis that provides its own proof. The importance of this facet of literary critique (and essay writing in general) is significant to the broader context of the New Zealand critical scene from 1945-1970. Of all the literary critiques examined in this thesis "Fiction and the Social Pattern" provides the starkest example of the mode's internal mechanic.

In addition to this, however, Chapman's essay also highlights the inherently moral and didactic orientation of New Zealand literary critique. "Fiction and the Social

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[47]ibid, p.45.
[48]Good, The Observing Self (Good's emphasis), p.13.

Pattern" contained an implicit rejoinder to New Zealanders to reappraise their collective morality, and acknowledge that many of their sexual, racial and social views were outdated. Although he did not appear to hold literature as the highest form of knowledge (his interest in sociology and politics precluded this), Chapman did assert a special place for literature within New Zealand culture and society; as an educative tool that could hold a mirror up to his readers and show them where their morality had failed. Interestingly, it was his methodological stance (based around sociological analysis) that allowed him to use literature in this manner. Chapman showed that literary critique did not necessarily demand a purely "cultural" approach, and that modern systems of academic inquiry could be attached to literary analysis with fruitful educative results. The next writer to be examined took a very different methodological stance (despite implicitly agreeing with Chapman's thesis). James K. Baxter openly pressed for a greater appreciation of the unconscious and forced his points with symbolic, rather than sociological, evidence.

ii] James K. Baxter, The Fire and the Anvil, 1954.

The theme of rebellion in the period 1945-1970 is best exemplified in the figure of James K. Baxter. Baxter occupied an important position in New Zealand literature. Born in Dunedin in 1926 to the writer and pacifist Archibald Baxter and his wife, Millicent (the highly educated daughter of John Macmillan Brown),[49] he eventually came to be seen as both a threat and an inspiration to New Zealand's developing society. Baxter had an early attraction to poetry and in his adolescence set about imitating almost the entire English poetic canon, while gaining "unspectacular"[50] results at secondary school that were later mirrored at university. His first collection of poems was published by Caxton Press in 1944 and in the following year Curnow included his work in A Book of New Zealand Verse. Alcoholism was a problem for Baxter from early on and contributed to some erratic behaviour and inability to complete his studies. In 1947 he shifted to Christchurch and began seeing a Jungian psychologist, establishing a facet of his personality that came to the fore in his

[49]Frank McKay, The Life of James K. Baxter (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.vii.
[50]Paul Millar, ' James K. Baxter', in Robinson and Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p.45.

tendency to mythologise both himself and the world around him, always searching for a "tribal"[51] identity he felt was lost when his mainly Scottish family emigrated to New Zealand. Alan Riach has noted that Baxter continually attempted to "privilege certain aspects of social identity which could be described as tribal".[52] His primary means of achieving this lay in mythologising his Scottish ancestry, converting to Catholicism and developing strong ties with the Maori world. This choice of tribal alternatives (like his excessive drinking) can be viewed as a personal affront to the established western bourgeois social structures that pervaded New Zealand during his lifetime.[53] Baxter's poetic and social orientation was thus at odds with mainstream New Zealand culture, and he remained an outsider for that reason. As a literary critic, Baxter had a special affinity with T. S. Eliot on this point. Eliot refused to accept that modern art simply assesses the damage done by modern life (the liberal view),[54] and doggedly asserted that even art could not repair the damage resulting from the collapse of the church and the hereditary aristocracy.[55] In short, Baxter followed Eliot in feeling that poetry was incapable of healing the modernist schism between man and nature, leading both of them to assert the need for Christianity and hereditary tribal affiliations (like Eliot, Baxter's understanding of the poet's importance to society remained, however, as if any effort was worthwhile). This is modernism at its most iconoclastic: not only is the modern world characterised in terms of a "dissociation of sensibility"[56] (T. S. Eliot, 1921) but western liberalism is seen as an inadequate response. In this sense the early Baxter was a sad figure, totally at odds with his society's system of morality and isolated through his refusal of its puritanical norms. He was perhaps the perfect example of Chapman's thesis that the artist in New Zealand was under-appreciated and left to fight his battles alone. Further to this, however, Baxter forcefully symbolised the *global* trend towards youth rebellion

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[51]Vincent O'Sullivan, 'Urgently Creating a Past: Remarks on James K. Baxter', in Kirpal Singh, ed., The Writer's Sense of the Past: Essays on Southeast Asian and Australasian Literature (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1987), p.95.
[52]Alan Riach, 'James K. Baxter and the Dialectic of the Tribe', in Williams and Leggott, eds, Opening the Book, p.112.
[53]ibid, p.113.
[54]Louis Menand, 'T. S. Eliot', in Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, p.17.
[55]ibid, p.54.
[56]Steven Myer, 'Gertrude Stein', in Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, p.96.

against the status quo. His public persona was dominated by this rebellious image until his death in 1972. Only towards the end of his life did he find peace, apparently finding the wholeness he sought in both his life and art.[57]

At once a poet, dramatist, literary critic and social commentator, Baxter took an oppositional stance towards his society, noting that the threefold aspect of the modern world was essentially "monotony, atrocity, anarchy".[58] His first effort at literary critique came when he delivered an address to the New Zealand writer's Conference in Wellington in 1951 while he was attending teachers college, and the resultant essay was published by Caxton as Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry, described by A. R. D. Fairburn as "an important contribution to New Zealand critical writing . . .".[59] Much of the force of Baxter's address is said to have been lost in publication. W. H. Oliver wrote that the young Baxter startled his audience with a delivery of "almost hypnotic eloquence . . .".[60]

Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry[61] was an early (and largely futile) attempt to displace McCormick and Curnow as the dominant critics of literature in New Zealand. Baxter's influence over literary critique is an interesting element in the history of the mode. Although his output of literary criticism was slight in comparison to that of Curnow, Chapman and Pearson (especially), he often entered critical debates through literary critique. Indeed, it is reasonable to suggest that Baxter attempted to redirect the literary-cultural debate away from the perceived hegemony of more well-known critics who had put forward a cultural nationalist position. In terms of the history of literary critique from 1945 to 1970, James K. Baxter exerted an important corrective to the views of more mainstream literary nationalists and proponents of a sociological attitude to literature. Baxter's role as a practising poet

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[57]Charles Doyle, James K. Baxter (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), p.35.
[58]Robin Dudding, ed., Beginnings: New Zealand Writers Tell How They Began Writing (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.49.
[59]A. R. D. Fairburn, review of Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry, by James K. Baxter, Landfall (December 1951), p.317.
[60]W. H. Oliver, James K. Baxter: A Portrait (Wellington: The Port Nicholson Press, 1983), p.59.
[61]James K. Baxter, Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1951).

also consolidated the importance of the Horatian attitude in the tradition (although as will be seen Baxter himself took pains to minimise the notion of the poet as seer that Curnow was prone to mythologise).

Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry began with a comment on New Zealand's early poets that pointed to the very basis of the provincial dilemma:

> They had two choices: to continue writing in an English tradition dissociated from their actual geographical and historical situation; or to begin the immensely difficult task of forging new symbols in a country whose landscape was alien and whose intelligible past was shorter than their own lifespan.[62]

Baxter was suggesting that from the outset of settlement writers were compromised between centre and periphery, between the traditions of London and possible new forms of expression in New Zealand. Indeed he noted perceptively that "[t]he dissociation of poetry from memory and sense-perception may account for the almost universal antipathy or indifference of our countrymen towards it".[63] In other words the enormous level of dissociation from traditional forms of poetic expression was such that no subsequent movements were able to develop at a local level without appearing staid and derivative.[64] Baxter's thought mirrored Curnow's in regard to these early years of settlement; specifically in the sense of a dissociation of sensibility, a culture in limbo, and a provincial outlook deferred for future generations. It is pertinent to note that such ideas were common currency throughout the mid-twentieth century world, amongst literary critics as varied in approach as T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein and F. R. Leavis.

The remainder of Baxter's short work began through reference to "[t]he new movement . . ."[65] which began with the work of Denis Glover, A. R. D. Fairburn, Allen Curnow and others during the nineteen-thirties and was fully established by the

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[62]ibid, p.5.
[63]ibid, p.6.
[64]This is an excellent definition of "Provincialism".
[65]Baxter, Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry, p.6.

time Caxton published A Book of New Zealand Verse in 1945. His interpretation of these poets was quite different to that of his contemporaries, moving beyond literary criticism by sociological and cultural analysis towards quite esoteric depth psychology. Disputing McCormick's claim of a sociological preference in New Zealand poetry, Baxter introduced a central theme in his criticism, the notion that animism is "an essential factor in the artist's view of the world".[66] Baxter was referring to the notion that poetry is largely a re-examination of childhood themes and experiences, and that those themes in themselves are part of a universal human experience that goes back to time immemorial. The influence of Jungian thought was unmistakable in this context, especially the notion of a collective human unconscious that contains within it mythic references and symbols shared by every human. In this sense the poet is less a cultural seer (as Curnow would have it) than a person capable of tapping the depths of human experience more broadly.[67] This was an important point in terms of the national versus international debate that was to ensue in future years, because Baxter's position continually transcended both, through reference to mythic rather than specifically cultural experience. Baxter's reference to and extension of Freudian psychology[68] in this context was especially telling, because it moved beyond the merely psychological and into the mythic in the same way as Jung. His later and more important literary critique "The Fire and the Anvil"[69] took up this theme extensively.

Baxter's literary critiques often referred to the need for artists (and younger writers especially) to take an active role in redefining the nature of modern culture itself. Although this stance can be related to the notion of the poet as Horatian seer, Baxter's primary motivation was related to a less purely literary notion - the concept of

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[66]ibid, p.7.

[67]Robin Dudding, ed., Beginnings: New Zealand Writers Tell How They Began Writing, pp.48-49:
Baxter noted the influence on his thought of Jung's Modern Man in Search of a Soul, suggesting that "[i]t offered the possibility that my subconscious mind might contain sources of peace and wisdom as well as ghosts, werewolves, hags, demons, and the various zoo of the living dead who crowded round my bed at night".

[68]Baxter, Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry, p.7.

[69]James K. Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil: The Macmillan Brown Lectures Given At Victoria University College, June 1954', in McKay, ed., James K. Baxter as Literary Critic, pp.13-69.

rebellion. He believed that "[o]ne of the functions of artists in a community is to provide a healthy and permanent element of rebellion; not to become a species of civil servant".[70] For Baxter literary endeavour transcended the formal imperatives of publication and criticism, and extended into broader society. Like most authors of literary critique, he viewed artists as agents of social change in New Zealand's puritanical and conformist society. Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry examined the role of the poet by questioning to what degree he should be an entertainer, and to what degree a "physician of his society".[71] In direct terms Baxter called for the questioning of what he believed was an inadequate doctrine of morals and politics and a refusal by society to believe New Zealand politician's claims that the "Just City"[72] had been realised. Baxter felt "that the protest of the socially minded critic [was] justified"[73] by a breakdown of physical and spiritual health throughout western civilisation. In a brief apology at the close of the essay Baxter asked pardon for the "gratuitous addition"[74] of his notions regarding the role of the poet in modern society, to what was ostensibly a piece of literary criticism. In retrospect what he was recognising (albeit without the requisite vocabulary) was the development of Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry from straight literary criticism towards the "terrible learning"[75] associated with literary critique.

"The Fire and the Anvil" was published by the New Zealand University Press in 1955 after Baxter delivered a series of four lectures at Victoria University College the previous year (as part of the Macmillan Brown lecture series). Chapman proclaimed the work as being the most important piece of criticism in New Zealand since McCormick's Letters and Art,[76] and the essays were subsequently reprinted in 1957 and 1960 before being included in an anthology of Baxter's critical work.[77] Although literary in orientation, Baxter's "impressionistic"[78] approach allowed him to follow

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[70]Baxter, Recent Trends in New Zealand Poetry, p.15.
[71]ibid.
[72]ibid, p.16.
[73]ibid.
[74]ibid, p.20.
[75]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, p.3.
[76]McKay, The Life of James K. Baxter, p.141.
[77]McKay, ed., James K. Baxter as Literary Critic.
[78]McKay, The Life of James K. Baxter, p.140.

his own more social and psychological interests (based essentially around the notion that New Zealanders were "living in the ruins of the Victorian culture . . .").[79] Much can be made of the connection between Baxter's image of New Zealand society and that of Chapman and Pearson, but the young man's interest in Jungian psychology and tendency to mythologise both himself and wider society led to a much more complex approach. A lot of the uniqueness of Baxter's prose came from his celebrated gift in metaphorical writing that enabled him "to set up a network of relationships where none were thought to exist".[80] It is in this sense that Baxter moved beyond the sociological perspectives of his contemporaries towards the creation of a local mythology of self and society that was highly self-reflexive and educative. "The Fire and the Anvil" exhibited all the major elements of literary critique as a distinct tradition in New Zealand literature. The essay worked from a literary point of view towards a mode of cultural understanding that privileged the Horatian voice of the poet. Moreover, Baxter's impressionistic and self-reflexive approach suggest that he was attempting to raise criticism to the status of art, and like Chapman, he was quite obviously trying to educate his readers in a new morality. In many ways, Baxter was the author most suited to literary critique as a mode of writing. Not only did he subscribe to the public role of the artist, he actively took an oppositional stance towards his society in his private life and steadfastly refused its system of morality until his death.

Baxter's first lecture in the series was titled "The Criticism of Poetry" and was concerned with "[t]he functions of poet, reader, and critic, [which] are closely related".[81] In particular, Baxter wanted to re-educate his audience with a new understanding of modern poetry, which he felt was held in low regard by the reading public. The didactic element in literary critique was evident here, as Baxter pointedly stated that the two-fold task of the literary critic was to examine individual texts as well as broadening the reader's appreciation of them. He also included criteria by

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[79]J. E. Weir, 'An Interview With James K. Baxter', Landfall 28 (September 1974), p.247.
[80]Vincent O'Sullivan, 'The Two Baxters - Or Only One?', in Pat Lawlor and Vincent O'Sullivan, The Two Baxters: Diary Notes by Pat Lawlor (Wellington: Millwood Press, 1979), p.78.
[81]Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.14.

which a good poem might be judged[82] and categories that might point to an "illegitimate"[83] appreciation of a poem. In line with this overt didacticism, Baxter argued against "classroom analysis"[84] of poetry that adhered to overly rigid conceptions of metre and reacted against an apparent "obscurity"[85] in modern poetry. Although taught that irregularities in classical poetry were innovative, for example, students were told that the same tendency in the moderns was due to a "lack of craftsmanship".[86] "The Fire and the Anvil" was an overt attempt to use literary critique as a means of altering public conceptions of poets and poetry. It was criticism of criticism with a cultural purpose.

Baxter's argument was not confined to the peculiarities of the education system alone, however, as his opening paragraphs suggested that New Zealand as a society was particularly prone to misinterpretations of poetry (indeed life) in general due to a "fear of freedom"[87] that inhibited an exploration of meaningful issues. Chapman had earlier explained the reasons behind these fears in stark terms. In Baxter's mind this not only inhibited the readers' response to poetry, but it inhibited the themes chosen by New Zealand poets to the point where "[p]oetry has become for many the scratching of a private itch. And those poets in this country who have climbed laboriously back up the stairs to a position where words make direct if painful sense are likely to find themselves whistling alone on the landing".[88] For Baxter, poetry and society were intertwined, and it therefore behoved the poet to educate as well as entertain his audience. It was this facet of his personality that made literary critique such a natural mode for Baxter to write in, because it allowed him to connect in one piece of prose the poet, critic and reader in an attempt to make them function as parts of a self-evidently connected whole.

As a corrective to his contemporaries' view of modern poetry, Baxter discussed metaphor and symbol, arguing that they are the only concepts really necessary for a

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[82]ibid, pp.24-25.
[83]ibid, p.26.
[84]ibid, p.17.
[85]ibid, p.14.
[86]ibid.
[87]Erich Fromm, cited in Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.13.
[88]Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.20.

sophisticated appreciation. His main reason for such a view was that metaphor and symbol allowed the poet to search deep within himself to root out hidden motives he would normally ignore. They allowed the poet to search his soul and understand "the uncontrollable nature of an associative process".[89] Baxter's belief that there is a metaphysical component to human existence was evident here, and it informed all of his criticism. As McKay suggests, "Baxter's criticism is the diagnosis of a spiritual malady, a lack of personal integrity"[90] throughout society. In a parallel to Chapman, New Zealand puritanism was seen by Baxter as particularly damaging, because it constrained a free and unfettered exploration of self and society, placing constraints on thought and action that led to individuals who were emotionally stunted. The poet's task was to lay bare "the Calvinistic pattern which underlies civilized society"[91] and assert the rights of natural man against the conformity imposed by a narrowly bourgeois existence. Later lectures in "The Fire and the Anvil" made Baxter's views more explicit, but at this point it is sufficient to note the saturation of New Zealand literary critique with more global trends initiated by Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis and later Lionel Trilling. Like his English and American counterparts, Baxter was writing about the gap left in society by the advent of state secularism that had removed even surface religious observance, while retaining an antiquated moral code that was damaging to individuals and society alike.[92] Poetry, and criticism of it, was a means by which an adequate and functional morality could be restored.

After discussing the formal constituents of poetry, the nature of criticism and the relations between poet, reader and critic, Baxter explored "The Creative Mask" in an effort to explore the nature of the imaginative process. Graham Good notes the orientation of all essay writing towards explorations of the metaphysical world in relation to self, even going so far as saying the form is highly existentialist in nature. "The Creative Mask" highlighted this aspect of literary critique well, because it was essentially a synopsis of Baxter's own beliefs about the existential implications of poetry. For Baxter, imagination related as much to philosophy and spirituality as it did

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[89]ibid, p.22.
[90]Frank McKay, 'Introduction: Notes on Baxter's Criticism', in McKay, ed., James K. Baxter as Literary Critic, p.x.
[91]James K. Baxter, cited in, Doyle, James K. Baxter, p.90.
[92]Eagleton, 'Sweetness and Light For All', pp.14-15.

to poetry. As he noted in his introduction "general statements about the significance of Poetry become philosophical or metaphysical statements about the nature of reality".[93] At issue for Baxter (and this was related to his perception of early New Zealand poetry), was the importance of a "significant statement"[94] in a poem, because "[t]he statement embodied in a true poem *refers* to a real occasion of illumination: it is the mirror of a spiritual event".[95] Without a significant underlying statement, poetry simply becomes "inflated trash",[96] as he demonstrated by constructing a mock poem about Mount Egmont that was conspicuously empty of metaphysical worth.[97] Revealing much about his highly religious personality, Baxter suggested that poetry fails when it does not include a spiritual event in which the reader can participate.[98] In the same vein Baxter praised the work of Holcroft and Curnow "because, whatever their limitations of approach and insight, they have tried to grapple with the more massive problems of self and not-self, flesh and spirit, man and society, anxiety and inspiration".[99] As literary critique began to develop as a distinct mode of writing such interconnections were to become more and more commonplace until, in the final analysis, the tradition comes to represent a matrix of statement and counter statement about the nature of self and society in New Zealand.

Although placing prime importance on the spiritual nature of poetry, Baxter was essentially referring to poetic composition and as "The Creative Mask" continued he began to explore techniques that might help both the poet and critic in this area. He also placed great importance on criticism as a means by which the true value of a poem could be disclosed. Baxter's logic regarding poetic composition and criticism disclosed his personality (and particularly his interest in myth and Jungian psychology). Specifically, in his critical philosophy he rejected the scientific approach of American New Criticism on the grounds that:

> In the field of aesthetics, as in the field of ethics, one's data

[93]Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.32.
[94]ibid, p.35.
[95]ibid, p.36 (Baxter's emphasis).
[96]ibid, p.34.
[97]ibid, pp.32-35.
[98]ibid, p.36.
[99]ibid, p.39.

> are derived in the last analysis from introspection; and it is useless to attempt to reduce subjective criteria to an exact objective science. Beyond a certain point definition defeats its aim of clarifying, for the terms become more exact than the processes they describe.[100]

Here Baxter was suggesting that at a certain point language fails the user, and without recourse to metaphor the essential truth of a statement is lost. True meaning for Baxter always remained shrouded in both spirituality and the unconscious mind, two areas that only myth could adequately represent. In a sense, Baxter was at his weakest when attempting to play the role of academic by codifying and pinning down mental phenomena in an easily explainable form. Baxter's "weakness" in this area stemmed from a lack of belief in the efficacy (or even desirability) of such a process. [101]

Much of "The Creative Mask" referred to criticism, and the role of the critic in disseminating poetic insight to the wider public. In this context Baxter went on to discuss his concepts of "*total vision*"[102] and "*creative freedom*",[103] both in relation to the "*matrix*"[104] or the totality of the cultural and ethical background to western civilisation. In effect he was referring to censorship, and the duty of a critic to take into account the full social and cultural context of a poem, rather than dismissing it on moral grounds. Baxter remarked that "[a] great disservice is done for poetry by those critics who wish to prune, and make polite".[105] He was aware of New Zealand society's tendency towards a repression of sexuality (Chapman had already explored this, but Baxter could see it for himself), and felt that this was especially damaging to creative freedom and hence the ability of a poet to engage his full self in composition. The young poet argued this point in an interesting way that reflected his Christian belief system. Specifically, he referred to the "*matrix*"[106] of western civilisation, and its frequent denial of the unity of flesh and spirit (as in Manicheanism and Victorian

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[100]ibid, p.36.
[101]McKay, 'Introduction', p.xi.
[102]Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.40 (Baxter's emphasis).
[103]ibid (Baxter's emphasis).
[104]ibid (Baxter's emphasis).
[105]ibid, p.41.
[106]ibid, p.40 (Baxter's emphasis).

Puritanism) that he believed to be central to the creative process. It was his intention to point out to New Zealanders that their society "sets its face against the unity of flesh and spirit, and hence against the unity of an art form".[107] Baxter argued that the early Christian asceticism and rational theology of Jerome and Augustine were gained at the loss of a natural animism that provided the initial spark in the creative process. New Zealand's puritan culture was therefore antithetical to the development of a "*total*"[108] poetic vision, and it was the role of poet and critic alike to prompt a change, through either a cogent form of Christian humanism or the use of writers like Dostoievski "or even Sartre"[109] who might shed light on a society that denied a most basic form of self expression. Not surprisingly, Baxter believed that "[m]odern man desires as much to be delivered from an uncreative society as from his sins".[110]

It fell to the poets and critics to deliver New Zealanders from their repressive culture, therefore, pointing out failings and discovering in themselves and their art the true nature of existence. Baxter was not alone in conferring such a lofty role on literature of course, because it stemmed from the prevailing twentieth century view (initiated by Matthew Arnold the previous century) taken up by all practitioners of literary critique. Literary insight was seen as a fount of rebellion against restrictive cultural norms, and the critic was the disseminator of these truths. Like Chapman, Baxter saw adolescence as a key period in the development of rebellious thought, and suggested that artists in general retained much of this adolescent angst in their assertion of creative freedom, because "[t]he huge discovery of the adolescent, which brings with it a torment that most are glad to shrug off in conformity, consists in his knowledge that freedom is not an ideal to be attained but already man's condition . . .".[111]

The nineteen-fifties was a period when the concept of rebellion was deeply explored, leading eventually to the explosion of youth culture that began with the Beat Generation and led on to the Hippie movements of the nineteen-sixties (that Baxter

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[107]ibid, p.42.
[108]ibid, p.40 (Baxter's emphasis).
[109]ibid, p.43.
[110]ibid.
[111]ibid, p.47.

was often associated with in later years). Albert Camus wrote a series of essays on the concept of rebellion and his central thesis was remarkably similar to Baxter's, suggesting not a direct link between the writers (there is no direct evidence that Baxter read Camus), but a commonality of experience across modern western civilisation generally. New Zealand's frequently noted isolation from global intellectual trends therefore needs to be questioned here. Although Chapman and Pearson (especially) wrote as if the New Zealand social pattern was singular in its repressiveness, their provincial outlook obscured what was in fact a global phenomenon. Two years before Baxter wrote "The Fire and the Anvil" the French writer Albert Camus had written that "rebellion, in man, is the refusal to be treated as an object and reduced to simple historical terms. It is the affirmation of a nature common to all men, which eludes the world of power".[112] In Baxter, history and tradition were not necessarily negative forces, however. On the contrary, Baxter was searching for a tradition that could restore to him the sense of tribal identity he felt was lacking in New Zealand. In "The Fire and the Anvil" Baxter defined tradition as a corpus of writings by a people cognisant that freedom *is* the basic human condition and although frequently appropriated by the state for its own ends, it alone could provide the knowledge necessary for future creative acts. New Zealand's lack of any obvious tradition suggested to Baxter that it was also a culture without insight into the meaning of spiritual freedom. Baxter differed from the prevailing intellectual norm within New Zealand letters in that he acknowledged the usefulness of the entire western tradition in the development of New Zealand culture, rather than centering on a narrow nationalism or undefined internationalism. Other critics of the period were more concerned with exploring problems they felt to be endemic to New Zealand than exploring the human condition in a general manner. At the close of "The Creative Mask" Baxter explained his overall title in this same context by suggesting (in his inimicable style) that "[w]hat is forged out between the hammer of individual striving and the anvil of group necessity enriches eventually the life of the group. The significance lies in the fact that the struggle is real".[113]

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[112]Albert Camus, The Rebel (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), p.216.
[113]Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.49.

In the final lecture of "The Fire and the Anvil" Baxter explored this connection between individual striving and group necessity with a discussion of "Symbolism in New Zealand Poetry", viewing symbolism as a door to the unconscious mind that is shared by all humans. Symbolism for Baxter "lies at the roots of a poem where art form and suffered reality coalesce . . .",[114] and poetic interpretation for Baxter seemed to hinge on this relationship. He felt that poets needed to be capable of drawing on the strength of the "animistic" pattern which lay underneath New Zealand's Calvinistic culture without being submerged by the power of it: "a difficult and even dangerous procedure".[115] Symbolism thus became a means by which the poet could interact with and examine New Zealand society on the deepest human terms. Difficulties peculiar to the colonial context complicated the transaction, however, because New Zealanders did not share one particular mode of symbolism. Alienated from the rest of the world at the bottom of the South Pacific and with a limited tradition of art and ideas it was unclear which symbols were appropriate. Baxter argued that in terms of symbolism, New Zealand was in a peculiar situation because there was no single tradition to which poets could have recourse. Instead there was a tendency to blend aspects of the western tradition with Polynesian mythology in an attempt to formulate a symbolic apparatus specific to New Zealand. On the one hand, Baxter viewed this inclination as a fallacy because in terms of the human condition there is no pressing reason to formulate a symbolism specific to any historical location. The "myth of insularity"[116] that demanded attention to local particulars allowed inspection of New Zealand's historical situation but did little to invest New Zealand poetry with a truly human significance. Early attempts to draw on Maori legend and mythology by Alfred Domett and Jessie Mackay proved to be sentimental and even ethnocentric, and Baxter suggested that the only really successful attempt to use Maori symbolism was in Keith Sinclair's "Memorial for a Missionary".[117] In line with his understanding of the animistic value of all human experience, Baxter saw no reason why Maori mythology should be preferred to Greek or any other form of myth, and his criticism

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[114]ibid, p.51.
[115]ibid, p.54.
[116]ibid, p.53.
[117]ibid, p.55.

of New Zealand poetry in this sense seemed centred around a dislike of *programmatic* attempts to formulate a local symbolism. For Baxter the development of a local mythology had to be purely artistic and unconscious.

Moving away from a discussion of the more overt attempts to develop a local symbolism, Baxter then put forward an outline of what he saw as the most common symbols used in New Zealand poetry, centering on an interplay between symbolism of the landscape and symbolism of personal lives. His aim was to examine what was already present in the national literature rather than theorising what should have been, noting that "the symbols recur so frequently in the work of poets otherwise quite dissimilar in intention that we must conclude that some deep connection exists between these natural features and certain areas of spiritual experience".[118] Literary critique as a tradition is characterised by this tendency to explore what is already present rather than postulate future possibilities. The mode is in this sense revelatory rather than constructive. Baxter's interest in psychological symbolism had led him to notice that New Zealand poetry was dominated by symbols of the sea, the mountains, the bush, the beach and the island. Other critics (such as Allen Curnow, who was interested in the beach as a symbol) had identified certain symbolic aspects of New Zealand poetry, but Baxter had a much deeper analysis that ranged across various natural features. His analysis was interesting, in that he often attributed more than one meaning to each symbol. The sea, for example, was interpreted by Baxter as not only "a symbol of death and oblivion"[119] but "as a symbol of regeneration".[120] Likewise, he found that the mountains were not only "maternal symbols"[121] but "symbols of ideal purity"[122] that could also refer to the menacing and hostile power of nature. His identification of dual meaning extended to the bush as well, viewing this symbol as reflective of both "the energy and fruitfulness of the natural world"[123] and "a menacing and entangling wilderness".[124] There was a thus a hint of the sublime in Baxter's interpretation of New Zealand symbolism, with the natural environment

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[118]ibid, pp.61-62.
[119]ibid, p.61.
[120]ibid.
[121]ibid.
[122]ibid.
[123]ibid.
[124]ibid.

acting as a symbol for human imagination. It is important to note that he was interested in outlining New Zealand's nascent tradition of symbolism in order to provide future poets with a store of common motifs that would enable them to further the exercise of creating a store of (unconscious) images. Like Allen Curnow, Baxter found "The Beach" to be the most fruitful symbol present in New Zealand literature. Connected to "The Island" "as a symbol of isolation from European tradition, both in place and time",[125] the beach symbolised for Baxter a dividing line in historical, spiritual, psychological and sexual terms. Not only did it act "as an arena of historical change . . ."[126] that had witnessed the arrival and departure of races, but it was also a location where spiritual revelations could occur; it was "the no-man's-land between the conscious and unconscious"[127] mind. In more prosaic terms, Baxter viewed the beach as a place where sexual adventures often took place, therefore locating it as a central location outside the pattern of New Zealand's (apparently) sexually repressive culture. Baxter's identification of not one, but five central symbols in New Zealand literature was significant, as was his awareness that they each held within themselves the possibility of differing interpretations. He was always concerned that New Zealand did not have a definite body of symbols to which writers and poets could return, and "The Fire and the Anvil" was largely an attempt to rectify this.

Baxter's sophistication and universal focus really became apparent in his discussion of the Man Alone theme in New Zealand literature. There were echoes of Albert Camus again in his assertion that the Man Alone theme "does not, in fact, reflect a morbid state of isolation from the European cultural tradition, but rather the condition of solitude necessary for the performance of a ritual act".[128] Baxter was alluding to the notion that "[i]n every rebellion is to be found the metaphysical demand for unity, the impossibility of capturing it and the construction of a substitute universe. Rebellion, from this point of view, is a fabricator of universes".[129] It was typical of Baxter's intellectual orientation that he conceptualised the Man Alone theme within this broadly humanistic framework, rather than simply viewing it as a

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[125]ibid.
[126]ibid.
[127]ibid.
[128]ibid, p.63.
[129]Camus, The Rebel, p.221.

rejection of New Zealand's puritan pattern. Baxter's position avoided the cultural cringe associated with a too familiar identification with New Zealand's colonial past and recognised that the "Man Alone" is an archetypal figure of human rather than necessarily local significance. Baxter was one of very few practitioners of literary critique who consistently asserted that New Zealand poets need not be isolated, and that New Zealand society was not alone in undervaluing the artist through repressive cultural norms. The central insight of Baxter's critique was that "an aesthetic statement is a statement in the context of human purposes",[130] rather than merely history, locality or philosophy.

James K. Baxter was (perhaps surprisingly) the most suited to literary critique out of any writers discussed in this thesis. Not only was he a practising poet, but he had a strong belief in the public role of the intellectual and was determined to re-educate New Zealanders in order to draw them away from what he perceived to be a false morality based around a Victorian past. In addition to this, his interest in psychology ensured his self-reflexivity and a certain engagement with deep-seated cultural norms. Most importantly, however, Baxter engaged with the entire tradition of Western civilisation, refusing to be mired within a provincial and short-sighted culture. The only aspect of his writing that deviated from the formal boundaries of New Zealand literary critique was his refusal to exalt literature as the highest form of knowledge; his religious beliefs precluded this. Nevertheless, each author examined in this thesis has provided a rather idiosyncratic contribution to the mode and none of them puts forward a critique that would fulfil all of the requirements outlined in chapter two. James K. Baxter came closest, however. "The Fire and the Anvil" exalted tradition over genius; had a strong cultural focus; was self-reflexive; engaged with issues of morality; aspired to educate; and attempted to raise criticism to the status of art. Because of his engagement with so many features of literary critique as a mode, James K. Baxter can be viewed as the figurehead of the mode.

iii] Kendrick Smithyman, <u>Post-War New Zealand Poetry</u>, 1961-1963.

The third writer to produce an example of literary critique in the two decades after

[130]Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.68.

1953 was quite different to James K. Baxter in sensibility, although the two poets were often viewed as a pair during their early years.[131] Kendrick Smithyman wrote "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" as a series of articles in the literary periodical Mate between 1961 and 1963. Mate was founded by John Yelash and Kevin Jowsey (who became Ireland) during the late nineteen-fifties, but they soon became unavailable and the editorial duties were passed on to a young Robin Dudding.[132] This small periodical took a broad line on its contributors, often including writers like Barry Crump who were unknown to readers of Landfall, and over the years successive editors proved willing to experiment with a wide range of poets in addition to including work by Maori writers. Although the title was suggestive of the New Zealand mainstream, Dennis McEldowney notes that it also had connotations of "spouse or sexual partner and the cognate verb, more sinister meanings in chess and Maori".[133] Mate was a little magazine that positioned itself between the gaps of the New Zealand literary scene and found a degree of success because of this. Although Smithyman's "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was often obscure and always idiosyncratic, it nicely fitted an image of Mate as a literary periodical willing to push the boundaries where more established magazines like Landfall might fear to tread. Indeed it could be said that literary critique as a tradition in New Zealand was largely dependent upon open-minded editors and publishers, given the often difficult content of the mode. Periodicals like Mate were not afraid to challenge their audience and in some senses their very survival depended upon challenging the mainstream. It was within this context that Robin Dudding suggested to Smithyman that he write some critical articles on New Zealand poetry for Mate, and later prompted him to expand his ideas into a full-length book[134] published in 1965 as A Way of Saying.[135]

Kendrick Smithyman was born in a small Northland milling town in 1922, the only child of a couple in their mid-forties who managed an old men's home.[136]

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[131]MacD. P. Jackson, 'Interview With Kendrick Smithyman', Landfall 168 (December 1988), pp.411-412.
[132]McEldowney, 'Publishing, Patronage, Literary Magazines', p.670.
[133]ibid.
[134]Jackson, 'Interview With Kendrick Smithyman', p.414.
[135]Kendrick Smithyman, A Way of Saying (Auckland and London: Collins, 1965).
[136]Peter Simpson, 'Kendrick Smithyman', in Claudia Orange, ed., The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography vol. 5: 1941-1960 (Auckland: Auckland University Press

Smithyman later noted in an interview with MacDonald P. Jackson that his "first playmates had an average age of something like eighty",[137] and his early reading was largely prompted by these old men who taught him from newspapers before he went to school.[138] His family shifted to Auckland during the nineteen-thirties, and it was there that he began his literary career. While he was attending Point Chevalier school he met the future poet and historian Keith Sinclair, who was to become a life-long friend. The pair moved on to Seddon Memorial Technical College before Smithyman began studying to be a teacher at Auckland Training College in 1940. While training to be a teacher (Smithyman later specialised in teaching special needs children), he began to publish in the college magazine, then edited by Robert Lowry.[139] During his service in the army (and later the airforce) during World War Two, the young Smithyman was able to get Lowry transferred to his unit and the pair spent their time writing poems on the back of forms used for recording items handed in for safe keeping in the store.[140] On his return from service abroad Smithyman married Mary Isobel Neal and remained with until her death in 1980.[141] After his inclusion in Curnow's A Book of New Zealand Verse in 1945 he went on to publish various works of poetry, including Seven Sonnets (1946), The blind mountain & other poems (1950) and Inheritance (1962).[142] By the time Smithyman came to write "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" he was well established as a literary figure in New Zealand, noted for his difficulty and breadth of subject matter.[143] He had a personality which consistently refused to bow to the New Zealand tendency to denigrate theoretical and intellectual complexity.

In terms of the local growth of literary critique as a tradition in New Zealand, 'Post-War New Zealand Poetry' can be seen as another example of a poet-critic attempting to explain his mode of writing to a wider audience. There was an

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and The Department of Internal Affairs, 2000), p.485.
[137]Jackson, 'Interview With Kendrick Smithyman', p.404.
[138]ibid, p.405.
[139]Simpson, 'Kendrick Smithyman', p.485.
[140]Jackson, 'Interview With Kendrick Smithyman', pp.407-408.
[141]Peter Simpson, 'Introduction' to Kendrick Smithyman, Selected Poems (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989), p.12.
[142]Simpson, 'Kendrick Smithyman', p.485.
[143]Jackson, 'Interview With Kendrick Smithyman', p.411.

interesting parallel between Smithyman and Baxter in this sense, because both were reasonably well established poets who felt at odds with the common theme of cultural nationalism developed by the likes of McCormick, Curnow and Holcroft during the nineteen-forties. As the twentieth century unfolded, modern poetry had tended more and more towards the obscurity that Smithyman (and to a lesser extent Baxter) practised; a tendency that New Zealand cultural nationalists often bewailed. Lawrence Lipking notes, however, that "[f]or better or worse, obscurity tempts readers to hope for a key, and no one seems more qualified than the poet to provide it".[144] This is the basis of the Horatian, or "poet-critic" stance, at once defending his poetry and providing a key to his audience so they might better understand it. Similarly, both Smithyman and Baxter wrote their criticism during relatively inactive periods in their poetic careers. Although they can be viewed as New Zealand's most prolific poets, their criticism reflects a fallow period in their creative output where critical reflection allowed them to develop their thoughts and regain their artistic composure. This too has been characteristic of the poet-critic throughout history.[145]

The four essays that compose "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" analysed New Zealand poetry in terms of a perceived shift from a "Romantic" style towards a more "Academic" mode. The first essay in the series, "The Sublime and the Romantic",[146] reflected Smithyman in a stubborn mood that condemned an inclination in New Zealand poetry that he viewed as romantic, misled and sickly. The essay was a fine example of the interaction of literary critique with the wider literary scene, as Smithyman took issue with McCormick, Holcroft, Curnow, and other critics of criticism that adopt "mystiques of settlement, or theories of social process"[147] in their interpretation of poetry. The essay was peppered with rhetorical questions that dismantled the presuppositions of earlier poets and critics alike with the insight that "[i]t is very important for a country to have an indigenous literature but, as soon as we begin thinking about the nature of that literature, reflection is bedevilled by

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[144]Lawrence Lipking, 'Poet-Critics', in Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, p.441.
[145]ibid, p.444.
[146]Kendrick Smithyman, 'Post-War New Zealand Poetry: The Sublime and the Romantic', Mate 8 (December 1961), pp.27-36.
[147]ibid, p.27.

language".[148] "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" added a note of caution to prior literary critiques that feigned to develop a national literature through recourse to history, sociology or some amorphous notion of "identity". At all times Smithyman remained aware of the difficulties of language that make explicit and programmatic development of a national literature impossible, and indeed dangerous. In Smithyman's eyes such criticism lent "a desirable, but improbable, orderliness".[149]

The central argument of the first essay centred around the concept of romanticism, and the way in which it manifested itself in the post-war New Zealand literary scene. In particular, Smithyman attempted to redefine the concept in terms of American Allen Tate's essay "The New Provincialism",[150] which looked at literature in the southern United States.[151] Smithyman was prompted by an ongoing debate in New Zealand letters concerning the nature of nationalism, regionalism and internationalism (it was the same debate referred to by earlier critics as "The South Island Myth"). His point was that the debate was suffering from shifting terminology that did little to extend an understanding of what New Zealand literature actually was, and in pointing towards the writing of Allen Tate he hoped to lend a level of assuredness to the argument. His reference to Tate also shed light on his critical orientation. It was through his adherence to Tate and other New Critics that Smithyman signalled his distance from more mainstream practitioners of literary critique in New Zealand. Like Baxter, his poetic and critical allegiances were idiosyncratic and quite outside the common thread of literary criticism in New Zealand.

New Criticism originated in the southern United States through the writing of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren, who constructed a "critique of modern America . . ."[152] that opposed the capitalist, commodity based culture

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[148]ibid.
[149]ibid.
[150]Allen Tate, 'The New Provincialism', in Allen Tate, The Man of Letters in the Modern World: Selected Essays 1928-1955 (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1964), pp.321-331.
[151]Smithyman, 'The Sublime and the Romantic', p.30.
[152]Mark Jancovich, 'The Southern New Critics', in Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, p.204.

developing during the early twentieth century. Although the New Critics were often seen as formalists who insisted on criticism that looked only at the words on the page (rather than biographical, historical, and social processes), their original impetus lay in a redefinition of the cultural aims of middle America. They opposed the romantic impulses implicit in literary critics from Matthew Arnold onwards, that deified the poet as cultural seer and placed the critic in a position of priest or midwife to the burgeoning cultural industry. Instead of relating texts to their cultural environment, they focused on the development of critical precepts that could be applied to any text, allowing a movement from the amateur man of letters towards the academic professional. The New Critics were instrumental in the professionalisation of literary studies and the movement away from philology and historical analysis towards criticism of the text in and for itself. It is for this reason they are often denigrated as being responsible for an amoral criticism that refused to take into account biography and historical milieu in favour of a rarefied and impersonal mode of literary theory. It is more accurate to see them as the advance guard in the professionalisation of literary study and its movement into the academy. Prior to the New Criticism, literary studies were viewed with scorn by the established disciplines as being prone to romanticism and amateurism.[153] Smithyman was singular in the New Zealand context for latching onto these ideas and promoting the notion of a rigorous (and more internationally oriented) mode of academic criticism, once again suggesting his personal strength in opposing the status quo.

Smithyman's use of Allen Tate hinged on one particular passage from "The New Provincialism" that is worth quoting in full, both as an indicator of Smithyman's antecedent, but also as a caveat to the common conception that the New Critics were against tradition and history in any guise:

> regionalism is that consciousness or that habit of men in a given locality which influences them to certain patterns of thought and conduct handed to them by their ancestors . . . . [w]hen the regional man, in his ignorance, often an intensive and creative

[153]Wallace Martin, 'Criticism and the Academy', in Litz et al., The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, pp.306ff.

> ignorance, of the world, extends his own immediate necessities into the world, and assumes that the present moment is unique, he becomes the provincial man. He cuts himself off from the past, and without benefit of the fund of traditional wisdom approaches the simplest problems of life as if nobody had ever heard of them before.[154]

Paraphrasing Tate, Smithyman's argument in "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was that the so-called South Island Myth debate suffered from a lack of regard for the essentially international and trans-historical nature of the human condition. The resultant cultural angst drew critics to the implicit conclusion that New Zealand's situation was atypical to human history. It was then natural for the misconception to grow that the tradition offered by western civilisation was inconsistent with New Zealand's situation. In this manner potentially useful terms like nationalism and internationalism took on a local flavour that disguised their true significance, despite being examined since the dawn of both nations and literature.

Smithyman attempted to re-orient the debate towards a broader conception of the New Zealand cultural context. Using Tate's logic, Smithyman argued for a more conscious mode of regionalism/nationalism (a "New Provincialism") that would be more accepting of New Zealand's position within the wider global context of western tradition and capitalist expansion. Implicit in this argument was a recognition that myopic cultural nationalism could lead to discussion that faltered purely through an inability to draw on the fund of traditional wisdom present in the western world. Without this point of view, Smithyman argued, the development of concepts like national, regional or international ran the risk of being merely local referents to intractable and cliquish literary debates. A critical apparatus such as this was "not informed enough to support a mature literature".[155] Defined in this manner, provincialism simply became "a name for the inhibitions inflicted on the poet by his circumstances".[156] Tate's "New Provincialism" was seen by Smithyman and the New

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[154]Tate, 'The New Provincialism', p.325.
[155]Smithyman, 'The Sublime and the Romantic', p.30.
[156]Menand, 'T.S. Eliot', p.51.

Critics as a way out of this condition.[157] The remainder of Smithyman's first essay in the series went on to illustrate how this negative provincial outlook had retarded critical and poetic practice in New Zealand; how cultural myopia had led to pretension, sentimentality and a sickly mode of romanticism. More than any other writer examined in this thesis, Smithyman advocated intellectual rigour as an antidote to New Zealand writers' flights of fancy.

Smithyman looked only at poets and critics who had published in the years since Allen Curnow's 1945 anthology, preferring either those who had died or those whose work was not the subject of critical dispute in the hope that "we may see their work whole . . .".[158] Before examining the poets, however, Smithyman felt it necessary to destabilise the critical apparatus put forward by Allen Curnow both in 1945, and later in the Penguin edition of 1960. The attack was mounted on two fronts. In discussing Allen Tate and the New Provincialism Smithyman used Curnow as an example of the issues at hand, pointing out that his use of the terms "regionalism"[159] and "nationalism"[160] were slippery at best, and had led Curnow to misinterpret both Smithyman's own poems and those of Charles Brasch and Keith Sinclair. In addition (and in line with the central orientation of the New Criticism) he bewailed Curnow's "vatic utterance[s] which not many of us can take seriously"[161] in a declaration that suggested Smithyman was uncomfortable with the positioning of literary critics as cultural seers. Once he had finished destabilising Curnow's position as critical seer, Smithyman moved on to an appraisal of a select group of poets. It should be apparent at this juncture that "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was a pointed attack on the hegemony exerted by cultural nationalists, with Allen Curnow being the obvious target. The splintering of opinion in the period 1945-1970 becomes apparent here. Not only did Chapman, Baxter, Smithyman and Pearson disagree amongst themselves, they also disagreed in important respects with the critical triumvirate of McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow. Literary critique is a mode of writing that requires

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[157]Smithyman's insight into this facet of New Zealand culture was not entirely original. J. C. Beaglehole's essay 'The New Zealand Scholar' (1954) had also argued for a more positive approach to the provincial dilemma.
[158]Smithyman, 'The Sublime and the Romantic', p.31.
[159]ibid, p.29.
[160]ibid.
[161]ibid.

authors to register their own perspective and enter into the discourse of New Zealand literature in a self-reflexive manner.

The first significant poet to be examined was Ursula Bethell, with Smithyman noting that when her admirers' criticisms were compared they seemed to him to be "almost at loggerheads about her virtues".[162] Despite agreeing that Bethell had a capacity to communicate "grief, wonder, reverence, joy, and awe . . .",[163] Smithyman voiced concern about defective craftsmanship that stemmed in his opinion from an excessive reliance on the Sublime style of the eighteenth century, once again pointing out the dangers of a turgid romanticism and an over saturation of poetry with religious belief. In this context D'Arcy Cresswell's poetry was also viewed as somewhat defective, and although Smithyman defended him against some of his harsher critics, he "would preserve no more than two or three [of his poems] . . .".[164] He then went on to "wonder if this would not be a wasted kindness".[165] Eileen Duggan was singled out for more fulsome praise due to her ability to delineate "simple revelation",[166] but once again Smithyman added a caveat in that she was a poet who too easily disregarded the sensitive nature of her talent. Smithyman seemed intent in all his criticism to take the gloss off the reputations of poets put forward by earlier critics (and present admirers) as important talents. His style was always reserved, with caveats attached in a very personal manner. In speaking of Duggan, for example, he stated that "[i]f I say that at times we may be reminded of Emily Dickinson or Christina Rossetti, I am doing her some deliberate honour even if to be reminded is not to be moved to outright comparison".[167] A partial explanation of Smithyman's equivocal style was provided near the close of this first essay when he stated that "categories such as regional or provincial, immanent or transcendent, are aids to order our thinking, but no more than aids".[168] At all times aware of the restrictive nature of language, Smithyman refused to build systems that might solidify into dogma. This orientation goes a long way to explaining his dislike of cultural

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[162]ibid, p.32.
[163]ibid.
[164]ibid, p.33.
[165]ibid.
[166]ibid.
[167]ibid, p.34.
[168]ibid, p.35.

myths and the positioning of critics as the arbiters of those myths.

Smithyman's second essay in the series, "The Road to Academe" furthered his attempt to redefine the terminology used in the discussion of New Zealand literature. In this essay Smithyman's main target was "romanticism"[169] again, but with a slightly different focus. A. R. D. Fairburn provided the impetus for his argument. Written in a breathless fashion that reflected his intense engagement with the topic, "The Road to Academe" launched into a discussion of Fairburn and R. A. K. Mason's understanding of romanticism and what they believed to be its binary opposite in New Zealand, classicism. Smithyman first constructed a "monstrous hybrid"[170] that posited a definition of romanticism culled from ". . . Parrington, Read, Brooks, Trilling, Valery, Gide, Whitehead et al".[171] The work of this list of eminent intellectual historians and literary critics was distilled into a definition that took romanticism to be essentially anti-scientific, devoted to nature and dominated by a reliance on the picturesque and descriptive epithets. The romanticist in this conception attempted to unify the dissociated sensibility of modern man through metaphor catalysed by "inspiration, spontaneity, enthusiasm or even ebullience".[172] There could be no more stark opposition to Baxter's position. Smithyman's reason for developing such a definition was to examine how far Fairburn and other New Zealand poets reflected such an attitude, and to work out whether or not the term was wholly applicable to the New Zealand context. This was especially important for Smithyman because he was dismayed at the characterisation developed by Fairburn and Mason of the dual tendencies in New Zealand literature. The romantic attitude was clear enough, but Smithyman was concerned that there was a conception in New Zealand that its opposite was classicism, or a kind of anti-romantic satirism. Smithyman's purpose in "The Road to Academe" was to show that contrary to this understanding, actual poetic practice in New Zealand indicated that the opposite to the romantic attitude was in fact "academic".[173] One gets the feeling that "Post-War New Zealand

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[169]Kendrick Smithyman, 'Post-War New Zealand Poetry: The Road to Academe', Mate 9 (May 1962), p.34.
[170]ibid, p.35.
[171]ibid.
[172]ibid.
[173]ibid, p.42.

Poetry" was a fierce rejoinder to those poets who had set themselves up as the dominant players in New Zealand literature with (to Smithyman) intellectually dubious credentials.

His first task was to dismantle the opposition of romantic and classic through reference to Fairburn (whom he held in high regard as a poet and personality). Essentially, Smithyman noted that although Fairburn did play the dual role of romanticist and satirist, these positions were not mutually exclusive in his personality. Rather, the satirist in Fairburn "operates as anti-romantic without eschewing his main commitment or allegiance".[174] Smithyman was suggesting that the importation of "the dreary quarrel of romantic and classic"[175] was anachronistic from the outset in New Zealand, built in the main through Fairburn and Mason's dislike for the flaccid romanticism of Kowhai Gold and journalistic criticism. Although believing that they were dismantling New Zealanders' naive reliance on the romantic attitude by inserting pointedly social satire into the literature, Fairburn and Mason were actually only exploring the flip-side of their own (romantic) personalities. In Fairburn's case Smithyman suggested that this was due to his inability to have "any but a shallow appreciation of the changes which came in the train of Auden".[176] Rather than unquestioningly accepting the critical apparatus handed down to him by his elders, Smithyman critiqued the canon of New Zealand poetry and developed his own empirical observations.

Smithyman first explored one opposition that he posited as a possibility; that between the "tough-minded"[177] Dennis Glover and Allen Curnow and the "tender-minded"[178] A. R. D. Fairburn and R. A. K. Mason. The suggestion proffered was that these poets exhibited opposite tendencies that might work for the entirety of New Zealand poetry. Using this distinction he went on to divide various New Zealand poets into two camps, one composed of Mason, Fairburn, Hyde, Bethell, Duggan and Harvey, the other of Wilson, Johnson, Sinclair, Dallas, Joseph and Stanley. The

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[174]ibid, p.35.
[175]Herbert Read, cited in, Smithyman, 'The Road to Academe', p.34.
[176]Smithyman, 'The Road to Academe', p.36.
[177]ibid, p.37.
[178]ibid.

centre shifted in this outline but Dowling, Brasch, Oliver, Curnow and Baxter seemed to inhabit this region. In true Smithyman fashion, however, he soon undermined his own argument with the observation that "[a]llegiances shift, talents are re-directed, the shadows shift about. Students and lecturers go off, fed and unfed. The black-board is most meaningful when wiped clean".[179] The inherent difficulty of Smithyman's prose lay in its protean nature, an element implicit in the essay form itself. As soon as the chains were tightened around a linguistic distinction Smithyman dissolved them and started afresh, always working towards his central conceit. In this case Smithyman began to connect the "tough-minded"[180] poets with a trend towards more intellectual poetry, soon to be characterised by him as academic. Rather than the opposition in New Zealand literature being between the romantic and the classic, Smithyman argued that it was between the romantic and the intellectual (or academic).

Smithyman began his history of the development of intellectual poetry in New Zealand through Basil Dowling, whose poetry evolved from the "markedly romantic"[181] towards "disciplined speculation"[182] and "contriv[ed] wit".[183] Smithyman perceived a development of the intellectual faculty in Dowling that eventually lent his poetry greater poise and depth of insight. Charles Brasch was also viewed as a progenitor of the academic stance in poetry, although Smithyman felt that his preoccupation with the myth of isolation was problematic and reflective of a personal anxiety that led him to a creative impasse.[184] Hubert Witheford and W. H. Oliver were similarly placed as architects of the academic mode, with Oliver in particular being singled out as having the capacity to make much of the intellectual style.[185] Smithyman reserved his highest praise for C. K. Stead, however, whom he viewed as a writer well attuned to "tragedy, irony and multitudinous distinction".[186] The pace of delivery was fast, with poets inserted into the discussion at an often

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[179]ibid, p.38.
[180]ibid, p.37.
[181]ibid, p.38.
[182]ibid, p.39.
[183]ibid.
[184]ibid, p.40.
[185]ibid, p.41.
[186]ibid, p.42.

bewildering rate. "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was in large part a reflection upon his contemporaries and colleagues. Moreover, his analysis of the New Zealand poetry scene was insightful and forcefully different to his contemporaries.

It was significant that the essays attempted not only to dismantle the terminology of New Zealand literature, but to provide a place for Smithyman himself (who can only be described as an intellectually oriented poet). "The Road to Academe" dissolved the critical apparatus of Fairburn and Mason in order to legitimise Smithyman's own mode of writing. The series was didactic and polemical. Literary critique can be viewed as a forum for self-promotion as well as the redefinition of New Zealand's literary-critical apparatus. This was signalled clearly in the last paragraph of "The Road to Academe" when Smithyman pointed out to his readers their poetic prejudices in a passage that was heavily influenced by the philosophy of the New Criticism:

> We find it hard to be objective; we still suspect objectivity in criticism; we distrust and are reluctant to accept attempts to objectify poetry, to remove it from being merely something within a social process. Consequently, our reluctance is enlarged to the point of repudiating what I called the autonomy of the poem. The less objective, the more subjective, the nearer romantic a poem is, the more acceptable it is. What is more romantic is more re-assuring: it is also easier. What is more disturbing we discover the further from romanticism we get, where eventually we have to recognise the force and right of language in itself, and have to appraise what we would sooner ignore, our responsibility to and for our language.[187]

This was a singular statement to make in the context of New Zealand literary critique, because although Smithyman was speaking to the broader literary community, he did so in order to refute their critical technique. He certainly did attend to the function of poetry within New Zealand culture, but his adherence to New Criticism led him to

[187]ibid, p.44.

eschew the employment of cultural and historical narratives in his interpretation of poetry, largely (the point is significant) to move away from the romanticism of earlier writers and critics. Smithyman's attention to language and his belief in the "autonomy of the poem" anchored his criticism. The cultural aspect of his critique was only related to a deadening reliance upon romanticism throughout New Zealand literarature and criticism. In large part it must be stated that Smithyman was using the techniques of American New Criticism in order to move away from this preoccupation. Attention to language was the means by which this could be achieved.

The evolution of Smithyman's thought became apparent at this stage in his series of essays. His third essay, "The Clayless Climate"[188] opened with the statement that. "A main responsibility of a writer towards the language of his community is to preserve what he thinks are its virtues. Another responsibility is to purge that language of its defects, so far as this is in his power".[189] On Robin Dudding's advice, Smithyman took this as his central idea in A Way of Saying (1965). His notion was that in developing their poetry, writers simultaneously tested the resources of their community's "**lingua franca**",[190] thereby discovering that community's "way of saying" and directing the language used towards more fruitful ends. Specific to this conception of the poet's responsibility was the assertion put forward by the New Critics that "[t]he form **is** the poem . . .".[191] The simplest way of describing this attitude is to note that it eschews attention to the sociological, biographical and historical backgrounds to a given poem. The words on the page provide at once the form *and* the meaning. Poetry for Smithyman thus became an experiment with language that suggested new poetic forms while at the same time challenging the linguistic preoccupations of his contemporaries. The only anchor to this experimentation was a belief that "[t]he form **is** the poem . . .".[192]

"The Clayless Climate" raised Smithyman's pace of delivery to an extravagant

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[188]Kendrick Smithyman, 'Post-War New Zealand Poetry: The Clayless Climate', Mate 10 (December 1962), pp.29-42.
[189]ibid, p.29.
[190]ibid (Smithyman's emphasis).
[191]ibid (Smithyman's emphasis).
[192]ibid (Smithyman's emphasis).

level. References to international poets and critics as varied as E. M. W. Tillyard, Wallace Stevens, Dylan Thomas, Geoffrey Moore (editor of The Penguin Book of Modern American Verse), Walt Whitman, M. M. Mahood, Phillip Rahv, Dr. Johnson, Wordsworth, Roethke and e. e. Cummings were set beside the New Zealand poets Allen Curnow, Pat Wilson, Keith Sinclair, Owen Leeming, Eileen Duggan and Fleur Adcock. No effort was made to provide background to each of these figures, and the effect is often confusing for the reader, who is forced to deal with Smithyman's idiosyncratic thoughts without proper initiation. Suffice to say that the list of poets and critics the reader was assailed with were generally viewed positively by Smithyman. He was certainly not embarrassed by the standard of New Zealand poetry. His major criticism in "The Clayless Climate" was reserved for "Clio"[193] who Smithyman pithily referred to as "the White Goddess"[194] worshipped by cultural nationalists like Allen Curnow. History and spurious myth-making went hand in hand for Smithyman. "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was thus quite pointedly anti-historical (as would be expected from a proponent of the New Criticism). Smithyman dealt with terminology and critical methodology and had little interest in providing a historical or philosophical narrative to ease the passage of his ideas. In this facet he was typical of the more challenging Anglo-American critics who "have not always articulated a philosophic basis for their criticism, [but] have developed a methodology and principles - even, indeed, an implicit theory - that interpret, analyze, and judge . . .".[195] Smithyman was singular in the history of New Zealand literary critique in his refusal to move beyond the immediate necessities of poetic practice and into its philosophical and historical contexts. He focused on his community's lingua franca instead, because in his mind this had direct implications for poetry.

The continual reorientation of the terms of reference behind Smithyman's arguments can be described as a stream of consciousness technique. The reader was forced to traverse the shifting sands of his mind without recourse to a traditionally constructed narrative. In this facet of his writing Smithyman was similar to Wyndham Lewis and Gertrude Stein, both of whom were critics noted for the difficulty of their

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[193]ibid, p.40.
[194]ibid.
[195]Daniel R. Schwarz, The Case For a Humanist Poetics (London: Macmillan Press, 1990), p.1.

prose style. Conversely, Chapman and Baxter were willing to ease the passage of their ideas with simple prose. Smithyman's attempt to reorient that rather simple debate in New Zealand poetic circles was a case in point. His aim was to point out that the debate over "South Island mythology"[196] was fallacious and ignored the fact that the differences between New Zealand poets of this generation was only a matter of degree. Smithyman referred back to the conception of academic poetry that he developed in the preceding essays, and went on to analyse this strain of poetry through reference to its central tendencies; "Oblique"[197] and "Direct".[198] He took the terms from E. M. W. Tillyard, and suggested that the "oblique" style of academic poetry in New Zealand could be distinguished from "direct" poetry through reference to its lack of attention to objective social concerns. Oblique academic poetry tended towards playful "surface"[199] concerns that could be equated to some American poets such as Wallace Stevens. Smithyman was quick to point out, however, that use of the word "surface" did not connote shallowness, but "metaphysics".[200] Where "direct" academic poetry focused on the construction of myths of identity in relation to concrete places, "oblique" academic poetry was characterised by a "solipsist"[201] orientation that continually asserted an absolute egoism (or, the notion that reality is entirely constituted from the mind of the beholder). The two standpoints were opposed through their attitude towards myth. Whereas one asserted that the construction of myths is a concrete activity that has a real and tangible association with its environment, the other asserted that all myth is artifice. Once again, Smithyman's prose was dense to the point of incomprehensibility and it soon becomes necessary to extract his central arguments and display them in different terms. His point was actually quite simple: New Zealand writers had to deal with a "clayless climate".[202]

Smithyman's point was that New Zealand culture did not have an established tradition and therefore lacked depth. Any writer who approached poetry in New

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[196]Smithyman, 'The Clayless Climate', p.33.
[197]ibid, p.31.
[198]ibid.
[199]ibid.
[200]ibid, p.32.
[201]ibid, p.33.
[202]ibid, p.36.

Zealand had to necessarily take an intellectual stance, because there was no tradition to resort to for depth of feeling. There was no option but to construct a tradition, and that could only be done with the mind. Poetry in New Zealand (whether it had an oblique/metaphysical orientation or a direct/romantic orientation) was all *necessarily* intellectual, and therefore "academic". Both groups involved with the South Island Myth wrote academic poetry; it was just that one side practised oblique academic poetry, the other direct academic poetry. New Zealand's clayless climate made academically oriented writing a given; any differences were simply a matter of degree. It is thus easy to see how Smithyman viewed the construction of binaries such as Fairburn and Mason's "romantic versus classic" as fallacious. The centrality of this belief in Smithyman led him into obscurity over and again. Even the theme of exile was seen by him to be symptomatic of New Zealand's essentially intellectual orientation,

> because separation is not critically a physical affair but requires the commanded mind and emotion of the writer and hence becomes something other than we expect it should be - because of these complications the theme of exile spreads from being a romantic appurtenance and moves toward the province of academic poetry which places so much on the workings of the mind at the possible expense of the innocent heart. We come into, we live in, a clayless climate.[203]

The remainder of "The Clayless Climate" went on to examine Allen Curnow as an (oblique) academic myth-maker,[204] even in his treatment of domestic scenes. Smithyman's difficult prose was unrelenting:

> They [Curnow's poems] were domestic in this sense, that they stop short of intimacy, of extreme personal revelation. They are contained as the transactions of family life are and like family life

[203]ibid.
[204]ibid, p.40.

> share something of public experience without being fully public and without being wholly private. They are personal, but not passionate. Their immediacy, in terms of scene, supposes a much smaller area of reference, as to a bay within a harbour whereas formerly the properties of landscape and the larger view were supposed.[205]

Despite a rather simple central argument, "The Clayless Climate" represented Smithyman at his most complex. In his final essay in the series he attempted to make amends, extending his discussion of domestic poetry in a manner that aimed to close his overall argument, and provide cogency to the essay series as a whole.

"The True Voice of Feeling"[206] examined the category of "domestic"[207] poetry that Smithyman identified near the end of "The Clayless Climate". His aim was to explore the extent to which New Zealand poets developed "sincerity"[208] in their work, and to what extent they had been led astray by a too fulsome commitment to this sentiment. Smithyman's position was one of a practising poet at odds with contemporary practice. This particular essay was published again in Wystan Curnow's 1973 anthology Essays on New Zealand Literature - a reflection of its importance to the contemporary literary scene. Smithyman was especially interested in an apparent primacy of subject throughout New Zealand poetry which led to a situation in which "what is said"[209] was given greater weight than his own search for "a way of saying".[210] In Smithyman's mind poetry that exalted subject and asserted a sincere attachment to that subject tended towards the "neo-romantic"[211] position he was so at pains to undermine. "[I]t is direct rather than oblique; a poetry of depth rather than surface . . .".[212] In this committed mode of poetry (that attempted to

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[205]ibid, p.41.
[206]Kendrick Smithyman, 'Post-War New Zealand Poetry: The True Voice of Feeling', Mate 11 (July 1963), pp.31-48.
[207]Smithyman, 'The Clayless Climate', p.41.
[208]Smithyman, 'The True Voice of Feeling', p.31.
[209]ibid.
[210]ibid.
[211]ibid.
[212]ibid.

convey the contingencies of its subject matter) there was an underlying attempt to express "the true voice of feeling".[213] It is interesting that although Smithyman did not hold to this poetic aim himself he still wrote about it in a balanced and appreciative manner. His aim in "The True Voice of Feeling" was not so much to criticise poetic practice in New Zealand, but to bring new conceptual apparatus into the discussion.

Smithyman's first realignment of the literary history was to exclude Allen Curnow from his discussion of the subjective New Zealand poets. His argument in "The True Voice of Feeling" centred around a discussion of James K. Baxter, Louis Johnson and Basil Dowling. Other New Zealand poets like Peter Bland and Marilyn Duckworth were also mentioned, but remained subsidiary to his main argument. Roger Horrocks has noted that Smithyman was the first New Zealand critic to see Allen Curnow in this sense, as a "maker of artifice"[214] involved in the cultural nationalist programme, but so aware of his role that personalism and subjective commitment became anathema as useful interpretative tools. As "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" drew to a close, Smithyman began to defer more and more to Curnow's position as the eminent critic of New Zealand letters. Indeed, in closing, Smithyman deferred entirely to Curnow by quoting an extract from one of his better known poems. It is as though in the course of writing "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" Smithyman came to respect Curnow's critical position despite attempting to overturn the hegemony exerted by his terminology. The effect is one of empathy and admiration for Curnow's achievements, because Smithyman had also:

> *found like all who had so long*
> *Bloodily or tenderly striven*
> *To rearrange the given,*
> *It was something different, something*
> *Nobody counted on.*[215]

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[213]ibid.
[214]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.28.
[215]Allen Curnow, 'The Unhistoric Story', cited in Kendrick Smithyman, 'The True Voice of Feeling', p.48 (Smithyman's emphasis).

It is interesting to see Smithyman exploring a mode of poetry that (despite him viewing it as legitimate) was entirely different to his own. He saw direct poetry, or the poetry of subject or domesticity, as being predicated upon an ability to balance "intellect and the other . . . problem of sentience".[216] (Smithyman took these terms from Coleridge's Biographia Literaria). The matter of intelligence related to the philosophical truism that "while poetry is a mode of apprehension it is at the same time a way of making a statement . . .".[217] Poetry implied the use of intelligence because in every poem there was a statement (implicit or explicit) that needed to be communicated in discursive terms. Poetry was equally dependent upon sentience, however, because a writer had to "defer to his own feelings while controlling them and while at the same time calculating to arouse among a reader's many sympathies the various but particular emotional responses . . ."[218] he wished to elicit. Smithyman's warning to New Zealand's more subjective or personal poets became explicit at this point, as he pointed out that "[t]he poem as voice of feeling cannot afford to deny that the reader's act of sympathy must inevitably entail some activity of intellect also . . .".[219] Poetry of subject that denied the interdependence of intellect and sentience was doomed to lapse into the hackneyed neo-romantic verse so bewailed by New Zealand critics since Fairburn and Mason.

James K. Baxter provided Smithyman with an opportunity to examine how domestic poetry could develop in a poet with genuine talent. Naturally, Smithyman suggested that over the course of his career Baxter had shifted from practising subjective, emotional oratory towards more ironic, intellectual and rhetorical poetry. At all times, however, "[f]eeling was being voiced, to someone . . .".[220] Smithyman was suggesting that Baxter's poetry developed a greater balance between intellect and sentience as he matured. He noted that "the truth of Baxter's subject and his truth to it are in harmony, which was seldom hitherto his virtue".[221] Smithyman's main criticism of Baxter lay in a belief that he failed to be consistent. Despite artistic

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[216]Smithyman, 'The True Voice of Feeling', p.32.
[217]ibid.
[218]ibid.
[219]ibid, pp.32-33.
[220]ibid, p.34.
[221]ibid, p.35.

bravura and a prodigious output, Smithyman felt that Baxter frequently misdirected the reader out of a lack of feeling for the moral dimension of direct poetry. The argument was significant, because Smithyman was pointing out that a poetry of social significance could only lapse into confusion (or banality) for the audience if the moral implications of the setting were not adequately expressed. "The daemon of neo-romantic expressiveness is wrestled, but who goes to the fall?"[222] Whereas Baxter asserted the need for a spiritual element, Smithyman pressed the moral dimension. Implicit in Smithyman's argument, of course, was that poetry of social significance depended upon morality for its impact, and when intellect was over-ridden by emotion in the poet this impact was fatally undermined. "Uncertainty in the voice of true feeling becomes dubiousness about true meaning".[223] The tone and terminological slipperiness of this argument is classic Smithyman. Direct poetry or poetry of social significance, neo-romanticism or direct academic, subject or moral exemplar? His terms constantly dissolve into one another to the point where the reader is left gasping at the intellectual gymnastics involved. In terms of his critical position (again, like Wyndham Lewis or Gertrude Stein) Smithyman seemed to settle with discontinuity rather than continuity. His aim was to challenge the reader to step outside his mental habits of mind and accept the arbitrariness of terminological distinctions.

The small scope of the New Zealand literary and intellectual scene was implied in the personal tone of most examples of literary critique, but Smithyman frequently appeared to have gone a step further and simply jotted down the vague ramblings of his mind in an almost conversational manner. The strategy was effective in that it differentiated him from other more mainstream critics like McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow. Take his transition from a discussion of Baxter to a discussion of Louis Johnson:

> A deal of what one says about Baxter may also be said about Johnson. Yet, perhaps in drawing attention to what Baxter and Johnson have in common is going about

[222]ibid.
[223]ibid.

> things the wrong way. On the other hand, a usual discussion of their work emphasises the differences between them, principally in diction, and those features which are distinctive need no recapitulation at this date.[224]

Smithyman went on to write about Johnson in a personal manner that, again, befitted the small scope of the New Zealand literary circle during the early sixties. Smithyman characterised Johnson as a person with a certain Sartrean insight into the banality of human existence, coupled with a Kierkegaardian quest to find "the Self in the Other . . .".[225] This in turn led him towards a recognition of human suffering and the Absurd. For this reason Smithyman believed that much of his poetry took an existential turn that moved from the socially significant instance towards a conception of the banality of human existence. This searching for ultimate human motivation and experience was suggestive to Smithyman of an attempt to find an ultimate symbol, "that something other than and more than either image or symbol which Graves, and Wimsatt, call the *ikon*".[226] Smithyman felt that Johnson was ready "to formulate his world-view as a system with more to it than the curiosity or humanitarian sentiment on which he has been content to rely".[227] The tone was at once personal and supportive.

Smithyman's discussion of Johnson led him into an examination of "urban"[228] poetry, because it was this factor (if any) that seemed to him to best characterise the Wellington poets. Poets like Bland, Doyle, Slater, Duckworth and Challis all practised poetry of social significance and like Johnson had a slightly Sartrean interest in their immediate (urban) environment. These poets minimised landscape and surroundings in their verse in order to meditate upon the human significance "of a coffee house conversation . . .".[229] This "School of Johnson" was further characterised in Smithyman's criticism by a tendency to over-emphasise the

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[224]ibid, p.36.
[225]ibid, p.37.
[226]ibid, pp.37-38 (Smithyman's emphasis).
[227]ibid, p.38.
[228]ibid, p.39.
[229]ibid.

intellectual side of their meditations at the expense of feeling, to the point where many of their poems lapse into arid vignettes of city life. Once again, the balance between intellect and sentience was lost. Smithyman explained this imbalance through reference to the Wellington poets' two other tendencies: personalism and the use of poetry as short fiction. Both of these aspects suggested that ". . . Wellington poetry showed itself drawn towards conditions which are the staples of prose . . .",[230] or more specifically, journalism. Smithyman was quick to point out that this journalistic mode of writing was quite different to that undertaken during the nineteen-twenties, relying more on a depth of feeling and specific subject matter than florid verse, but it was still essentially personal because "[t]he personal element is at once a product of youthfulness in writing, of a community which has a strong inclination to write to and for other writers, as well as being part and parcel with a declining or changing romanticism".[231]

The assertion of a regional quality in New Zealand writing was quite tendentious at the time "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was written, and Smithyman's prose reflected this. Drawing from the South Island Myth debate, there was much argument over whether or not New Zealand writing should be viewed as being regionally differentiated. Earlier on in the series Smithyman had suggested that it was useful to speak of the Auckland Metaphysicals, and in "The True Voice of Feeling" he asserted the presence of a typically Wellington mode. Although he used these distinctions to order his critical narrative, Smithyman appeared loath to become engaged in a debate over the overall merits of such a view. Rather, he equivocated and asserted that such distinctions had merit even if they did tend to obscure differences between members of the group:

> In spite of Doyle's disavowal, then, of any Wellington group, in spite of the lack of cohesion of the possible School of Johnson we may conclude there were attitudes and practices which brought into being a regional quality that while playing down the importance of scene made its

[230] ibid, p.41.
[231] ibid, p.42.

> regionalism otherwise distinct. The very unimportance of scene may be exploited . . .[232]

It was this kind of logic that allowed Smithyman to move into a deeper discussion of Wellington personalism, exploring Challis, Bland, Fleur Adcock and Marilyn Duckworth. All these writers suggested a movement within the School of Johnson towards existentialism and a greater detachment "which can make much of the Absurd".[233] This noted, Smithyman appeared in two minds over the applications of a personalist mode of poetry in New Zealand, wondering "whether, bluntly, we are interesting enough as people . . .".[234] He regretted the movement in New Zealand poetry towards "nonconformist"[235] avante-garde practices that appeared incongruous to him given the New Zealand setting. In this sense he set himself up as one of the "conservatives"[236] of the New Zealand literary scene in a critical assertion that suggests a lot about the increasing diversification of literary practices during the post-war years. Existentialism, neo-romanticism and the avante-garde had begun to compete with older positions like cultural nationalism by the nineteen-sixties.

So as not to conclude on a negative note Smithyman moved on from the Wellington group to a discussion of Owen Leeming, whom he viewed as having achieved "a nice poise between the sentient and the intellectual capacities . . .".[237] In addition, Leeming suggested to Smithyman that it was possible to write in a personalist mode without moving towards domestic vignettes and regional tendencies. Similarly, Leeming symbolised to Smithyman a correct use of history that was not monolithic, but rather a "mediation of the influences of a past upon a present condition . . .".[238] This balanced poetic nature was suggestive to Smithyman of Leeming's Catholic background which might also enrich the poetic life of New Zealand generally. This was simply because "there is a latent importance in the

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[232]ibid.
[233]ibid, p.44.
[234]ibid, p.45.
[235]ibid.
[236]ibid.
[237]ibid, p.46.
[238]ibid.

existence of a group of like-minded writers who have a community of belief . . .".[239] Despite often espousing elements of the New Criticism that viewed history with suspicion, Smithyman (like the New Critics themselves) did not argue for a total divorce from tradition.

Smithyman's historical sense was certainly more informed by elements of the New Criticism than any other practitioner of literary critique. "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was the most idiosyncratic of New Zealand's literary critiques for the same reason: there was no historical or sociological narrative to order the author's ideas. It must be noted, however, that the resultant obscurity was in large part purposeful. Following in the wake of essays like Letters and Art in New Zealand, A Book of New Zealand Verse, and "Fiction and the Social Pattern" (which all had strong elements of historical narrative interwoven with the literary criticism) Smithyman felt it necessary to assert himself as a practising poet first and foremost. His agreement with many New Critical precepts pressed him further in this direction, to the point where he actually stated that "if you eschew an historical approach you make difficulties for yourself, and these articles have tried to minimise the effect of the literary history and to seek for tenable generalisations".[240] "Post-War New Zealand Poetry" was thus first and foremost an effort to redirect the critical apparatus of New Zealand literature towards more useful terms. This can be seen in the constant mention of occasional reviews in literary periodicals like Kiwi, Hilltop, Arachne, Poetry Yearbook and Landfall. Critics as varied as Donald Davie, Jonathan Bennett, J. C. Reid and M. K. Joseph were considered alongside Mason, Fairburn, McCormick and Curnow. No source of material or opinion was eschewed in the interests of transparency. Critical opinions were not accepted or challenged on the basis of an external historical, sociological or philosophical narrative, but on the basis of Smithyman's own actual experience as a poet. The effect was difficult for the lay reader, but stimulating and rebellious in the context of a small literary milieu. In particular, Smithyman's position was a direct rejoinder to authors of literary critique like Robert Chapman and Bill Pearson who used sociology as a basis for their analyses. His contribution to New Zealand literary critique lay in his insight that

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[239]ibid, p.47.
[240]ibid, p.40.

tradition is handed down through various linguistic means, and therefore fidelity to tradition should be more about fidelity to the language of a community than to narratives of colonisation and material advancement.

Smithyman's critique was thus determinably literary in orientation. Although he clearly engaged in the ongoing conversation of the mode (through reference to Allen Curnow especially) he eschewed a cultural approach in favour of direct engagement with the lingua franca of New Zealand's poetic community. Likewise, his unrelentingly difficult prose was in many ways a reaction against what he perceived to be a too fulsome acceptance of the historical, cultural and sociological approaches of McCormick, Holcroft, Curnow and Chapman. Despite this, his critique was peculiarly self-reflexive, to the point where "Postwar New Zealand Poetry" quite openly operated as an authorial reflection upon Smithyman's own preoccupations and poetic concerns. The essay was also highly educative, in that Smithyman was attempting to introduce a new mode of critical analysis into the discourse of New Zealand criticism. "Postwar New Zealand Poetry" was a quite remarkable essay for this reason, because Smithyman managed to critique New Zealand literature without a specifically cultural approach; he used the New Criticism instead. The essay thus suggests the modal variance common to New Zealand literary critique. The aim of the mode is to critique New Zealand literature, and (as Smithyman showed) this can be effected without cultural analysis. Although his approach did not fit in with the general direction that literary critique was taking, it stood as a testament to the personal force of the mode; the way in which it has allowed individual authors to delineate their own concerns, react *against* the dominant tradition, and suggest new ways of reading and interpreting New Zealand literature.

"Postwar New Zealand Poetry" thus filled a gap in the history of New Zealand literary critique. The nineteen-sixties were relatively quiet in terms of literary-critical activity, and Smithyman's introduction of American New Criticism provided a timely corrective to previous critiques that had been biased towards historical and sociological inquiry. Moreover, the essay was unusual in that it was written over three years, allowing Smithyman's ideas to develop in tandem with feedback he had received along the way. Its publication in Mate signalled a deepening of New Zealand's literary-critical infrastructure as well, reflecting a slow movement away

from the hegemony exerted by Landfall in the post-war period. By focusing his critique on poets that had published since A Book of New Zealand Verse Smithyman updated the canon and gave voice to poets who had fallen into the shadow cast by Curnow's seminal work. Although at times difficult, Smithyman's prose reflected a desire to extend the criticism of McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow into more self-conscious areas of inquiry.

iv] Bill Pearson, The Maori and Literature 1938-1965, 1968.

The final example of literary critique to be examined in this chapter is Bill Pearson's essay "The Maori and Literature 1938-1965", which was published in 1968.[241] Pearson (1922-) was a well established literary and cultural commentator by the time this essay was published. Born in Greymouth, Pearson attended Canterbury University College before moving to Dunedin to complete a year at Training College. In 1942 he taught at Blackball school (where he gained background for his first novel Coal Flat which was published in 1963). His stance towards World War Two was deeply thought out and based around conscientious objection, which led him to serve in the Dental Corps in Fiji for a year before entering the infantry, where he served in Egypt, Italy and (later) Japan. Returning to New Zealand, he completed an M.A. at Canterbury before moving to England where he undertook a Ph.D. at the University of London. After a period teaching in England he returned to New Zealand and lectured at Auckland University College (1959-). The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature describes him as having a "distinguished academic career . . ."[242] involving fiction writing and social and literary criticism. His first major success came with "Fretful Sleepers: A Sketch of New Zealand Behaviour and Its Implications For the Artist", published in Landfall in 1952. Despite popular opinion, Pearson has asserted that this particular essay was "not so much [about] puritanism as conformity and intolerance".[243] In many ways it mirrored Chapman's "Fiction and the

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[241]Bill Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature 1938-1965', in Erik Schwimmer, ed., The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties – a Symposium (Auckland: Longman Paul Limited, 1975), p.217-256.
[242]Lawrence Jones, 'Bill Pearson', in Robinson and Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p.434.
[243]Alex Calder, 'An Interview with Bill Pearson', Landfall 185 (April 1993), p.53.

Social Pattern", although it had much less of a literary focus. Again, contrary to popular opinion, Pearson noted that the essay was not so much an argumentative gripe about New Zealand as an attempt on his part to come to grips with his own background and character.[244] Graham Good notes that this has been central to the essay form itself through history. Like each example of literary critique examined here, any essay becomes a "*re*-situation of the self in relation to the object or event described".[245] In this sense the essayist's perspective is a kind of "self-critique"[246] that Good suggests also found expression in Matthew Arnold's attacks on his "philistine" contemporaries in the middle-class.

"Fretful Sleepers" is a seminal document in New Zealand cultural criticism for its attack upon middle-class pretensions and narrow-mindedness, and in this sense it should be traced back to Arnold and the early cultural critics, but it has a lack of literary focus that places it outside the focus of this thesis. Perhaps more significant in the context of literary critique is the fact that it was written in London where Pearson was exposed to various literary-critical influences, including Basil Willey (the supervisor of McCormick's M.A. thesis) who suggested to Pearson that literary criticism should be "a judicious mixture of both background and text . . .".[247] This was in total opposition to Smithyman and the New Critics, who Pearson felt had been too swayed by McCarthyism and the politics of the Cold War. American academics during the fifties and sixties were reticent about getting involved in social and political issues for fear of governmental censure and the New Criticism provided an excellent means of avoiding this.[248] Conversely, Pearson was regularly involved in such issues. For several years he sat on the committee of the New Zealand Peace Council that opposed SEATO and called for recognition of Communist China.[249] Furthermore, although Pearson was never a committed Marxist, he described himself as a Marxist "sympathizer"[250] and much of "Fretful Sleepers" was related to his opposition to what he regarded as Fascist tendencies in New Zealand politics. It

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[244]Calder, 'An Interview with Bill Pearson', p.56.
[245]Good, The Observing Self (Good's emphasis), p.12.
[246]ibid, p.11.
[247]Calder, 'An Interview with Bill Pearson', p.72.
[248]ibid.
[249]Bill Pearson, 'Beginnings and Endings', Sport 5 (Spring 1990), p.20.
[250]Calder, 'An Interview with Bill Pearson', p.59.

would be difficult to find a critical approach more diametrically opposed to that developed by Kendrick Smithyman. Whereas Smithyman espoused the position of the New Critics (who opposed any involvement in social, historical or political issues) Pearson felt a heightened responsibility to point out what he perceived to be a decline into Fascism and dictatorial control. Pearson's only novel, Coal Flat (1963),[251] can be seen as an indication of his personality in this sense. It was written in the social-realist mode and was set on the West Coast amidst political and social intrigue.

Pearson's interest in Maori culture began soon after "Fretful Sleepers" was published, with various essays on the subject appearing over the years, each reflecting an interest in history, anthropology, sociology and literary criticism. Speaking in 1992 about one of the first of these essays, Pearson noted that ". . . Maoris provided a general cultural alternative in the obvious difference in their priorities and values from that of middle-class Pakehas, and . . . this was a tremendous relief".[252] After returning from overseas disillusioned with New Zealand society, Pearson began to feel that Maori culture could provide balance to his country's inherent materialism and puritanism. While lecturing at Auckland University he began an association with the Maori club there that lasted ten years, until he left for Australia in 1967.[253] On his return in 1970 the tone of Maori politics had altered and he felt it best to distance himself. It was while in Australia that he published "The Maori and Literature" and in this sense it should be seen as the summation of a decade of interest and interaction with Maori culture, both academically and personally. Pearson was different to other white male practitioners of literary critique in that he did not feel that his racial background necessarily excluded him from commenting upon the role of Maori in New Zealand literature; yet another example of the splintering of opinion that took place between 1945 and 1970. Were it not for him Maori would have been all but invisible in the early history of New Zealand literary critique.

"The Maori and Literature" represented the first detailed examination of New Zealand literature in terms of the Maori people, and can be seen as a progenitor to a

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[251]Bill Pearson, Coal Flat (Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963).
[252]Calder, 'An Interview with Bill Pearson', p.67.
[253]ibid, pp.67-68.

debate over biculturalism that was to take effect during the nineteen-seventies as social and political concerns over the future of Maori grew. The essay was originally published in The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties – a Symposium;[254] a collaborative effort that aimed to examine the position of the Maori people across all aspects of New Zealand society, economy, and the arts. The work was prompted by a growth of cultural awareness amongst Maori and a parallel recognition amongst some Pakeha that serious imbalances needed to be redressed. Urbanisation and increasing unemployment and social dysfunction among Maori had prompted protests and the beginnings of land claims that eventually became synonymous with late twentieth century New Zealand culture. Pearson was similar to Keri Hulme in the history of literary critique for realising that the programme of the cultural nationalists and their search for a common national identity was essentially Pakeha centred, and failed to give adequate voice to the original inhabitants of New Zealand. Pearson was similar to Chapman in this sense. His critique adopted a moralistic tone towards his audience, implicitly chastising them for their narrowly puritan outlook on life and attempting to educate them in a new, more inclusive and understanding morality. In using literature as his point of finite self-reference, he also implicitly subscribed to a belief in literature as one of the highest (if not the highest) forms of knowledge. For Pearson, literature was a means by which New Zealanders could view themselves whole, without the often masking effect of cultural norms. Literature, in other words, was implicitly recognised as a powerful tool of education.

'The Maori and Literature' used literature to critique New Zealand's racial politics. As Pearson pointed out, even when Maori were depicted in New Zealand literature the image was twisted towards Pakeha conceptions that were usually far from reality. There were very few practising Maori writers in New Zealand at the time, and images of Maori in literature tended to consist of simplistic and romanticised stereotypes that were divorced from the situations most modern New Zealand Maori experienced. Nothing could express this predicament better than Pearson's opening sentence:

> The greater part of this essay must be concerned, because

[254]Schwimmer, ed., The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties.

> there is so much of it, with Pakeha writing about Maori. All of this writing is concerned with the Maori as an outsider or debutant in New Zealand society, individually or communally.[255]

In order to deal with the massive amount of purely fanciful writing about Maori, Pearson took three writers as a point of reference: Roderick Finlayson, John Mulgan and Hamilton Grieve.[256] "They wrote at a time when Maori participation in European society was minimal, when the discrepancy between European and Maori health, income, housing, education, clothing, and spoken English was much greater than it is today. In such a situation communication between members of the two cultures could only be infrequent or imperfect".[257] The three examples Pearson chose had different attitudes towards the Maori in their writing. Finlayson was the first writer to actually see something preferable to European society in Maori culture, and Pearson viewed this as a considerable advance. Unfortunately, as Pearson noted, Finlayson's writing was essentially simple in conception and mood and when he attempted to enter the character's minds the effect was trite. Simple passions moved the characters to premature deaths and despite being humorous they were often also impulsive and violent. John Mulgan's Man Alone (1938) was also seen as a considerable advance by Pearson and, once again, he felt that the writing benefited from detached observation rather than attempts to enter into the minds of Maori characters. For Pearson, however, the main quality of Mulgan's writing was that he actually included inter-racial relationships.[258] The remainder of "The Maori and Literature" frequently took the (adequate or otherwise) depiction of inter-racial relationships as an indicator as to the realism of character depiction. The technique worked well because it highlighted what had historically been a point of contact that New Zealand culture had either discouraged or pretended to be absent.

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[255]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.217.
[256]Roderick Finlayson (1904-1992) was a prose writer who focussed on Maori-Pakeha relations throughout his career. John Mulgan (1911-1945), the son of poet, critic and essayist Alan Mulgan, became well-known for his much cited novel Man Alone (1939). Hamilton Grieve (1902-1990) focussed upon romance stories set in New Zealand, but written for an English audience.
[257]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.217..
[258]ibid, p.218.

Hamilton Grieve's reminisces about her teaching days at Pipiwai came in for the harshest criticism from Pearson. He saw a "benign superciliousness"[259] in her depiction of "dusky humanity"[260] and "embryonic little savages".[261] Interestingly, however, Pearson did not include Grieve in order to point out her failures as a writer so much as to point out that she "reflects not only the social changes in Maori communities but a change in European general attitudes to the Maori"[262] that were not wholly positive. In a prefatory note to her second edition, Grieve noted that her reminisces were only true in terms of herself at the time. She *did* characterise Maori in that way and was now aware that this was inappropriate. Pearson would have none of this, and used a refined logic that pointed out the hypocrisy implicit even in modern European attitudes:

> No doubt the reminiscences are, as Miss Grieve explains, 'a true picture of the time when they were written', but only of the author's impressions of her experience at that time. It would be rash to doubt the incident where the old men queue daily, coughing conspicuously, for a medicine with an alcohol base, but stop coming for treatment when the medicine is changed. The question is why the author should have given it so much prominence or been satisfied with the apparently obvious explanation. Were the respiratory ailments simulated? How much faith did the old men have in Pakeha medicine (prescribed incidentally, not by a doctor but by a teacher)? It could be that they were in fact ill, but having no faith in a cure, came only when the medicine was pleasant. In a more subdued way, and with wings dipped to present-day pieties of integration, Miss Grieve's approach still continues, sometimes in less affectionate

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[259]ibid.
[260]Hamilton Grieve, cited in, Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.218.
[261]Hamilton Grieve, cited in, Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.218.
[262]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.219.

spirit.[263]

In "Fretful Sleepers" Pearson was also quick to note the inherent hypocrisy of contemporary New Zealanders. Even changes in writing patterns that moved away from deplorable caricatures towards the characterisation of Maori as dignified and noble people could hide "a common Pakeha syndrome in which contradictory attitudes can co-exist".[264] There was open hostility on Pearson's part towards his own contemporaries who feigned racial tolerance while actually holding (dangerously) racist and patronising viewpoints. He was adept at pointing out that Pakeha benevolence was often a cover for deep seated prejudice, as in his use of quotations from several Pakeha novelists:

> So the middle-aged Maori woman, fat and slovenly in the cast-off cotton dress of some previous mistress, gave her flashing smile and rolled her enormous dark eyes, and sang, in her high pure voice, the ancient songs of her people.[265]

> Anyway your children will be only one quarter Maori, and if they marry *pakehas*, as they probably will, their children will be one eighth Maori and the strain practically bred out, more's the pity.[266]

Pearson's tone as a cultural commentator was uncompromising and laudable in the context of nineteen-sixties New Zealand. Unlike other authors of literary critique in the period, he was willing to deal with the difficult subject of racism. He appeared genuinely affronted by the inability of his society to see how compromised their attitudes were, and how apparent advances only hid even more deep seated prejudices. Hypocrisy was his central theme, but for him it was made all the more

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[263]ibid.
[264]ibid.
[265]Dorothy Eden, cited in Bill Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.220.
[266]M. Brent, cited in Bill Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.220.

dangerous because of its unconscious (and even arrogant) acceptance of the cultural norm:

> We are the most puritan country in the world, yet we love a dirty story.[267]

> There is a dimension of experience the New Zealander does not know. Because he is afraid of that accursed self of his that might get off-side of his norm-ridden society.[268]

Pearson realised that advances in attitudes towards the Maori were often merely reactions to a shift in the cultural norm. He viewed New Zealand society with undisguised contempt for its blindness and self-righteous assertion of being in possession of the "proper" attitude at all times.

"The Maori and Literature" used source material that served Pearson's purposes well. An example of this was his examination of Dulce Carmen's voluminous output of romance stories, fifteen of which include Maori characters. Despite the obviously questionable quality of these stories Pearson saw them as being reflective of deeply ingrained attitudes towards Maori at the more popular cultural level. Carmen reflected a common lack of interaction with Maori and a resultant "snobbishness and . . . benevolence, mixed . . . with contempt".[269] Her writing suggested to Pearson a nineteenth century idealisation of coloured people that was benign on the surface, but indicative of a deep prejudice. Her ideal of integration was reflected in her handling of intermarriage, where she explicitly believed that it was better to stick to one's own race.[270] Ivy K. Preston was another writer identified as ethnocentric by Pearson, and like Carmen handled inter-racial relationships in a romanticised and disingenuous

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[267]Bill Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers', in Pearson, Fretful Sleepers, p.10.
[268]ibid, p.14.
[269]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.220.
[270]ibid, p.223.

manner typical of the Pakeha mainstream. He noted that "[i]n almost all the romances any Maori candidate for marriage with a Pakeha is exceptional in having a pale skin or delicate features or superior rank or education or some European ancestry".[271] At the time of writing, Pearson could find no New Zealand writer who had taken for subject matter the marriage of a full-blooded Maori man and a Pakeha woman. Stock characters remained the educated, high-born Maori man, the middle-aged matriarchal woman, the tattooed old woman, the loyal domestic servant, the flashily dressed young man, the fat, lazy but good natured older men and the dignified male elders. Perhaps most common was the use of the comic, ill-adapted Maori who was loveable yet shrewd.[272] Pearson suggested that this was the oldest literary stereotype in New Zealand literature, stemming from Maning's Old New Zealand. "He is still with us, sometimes shrewd, sometimes stupid".[273] The only consolation Pearson could find was that the most hostile presentations of Maori were often by writers who were not New Zealanders.[274]

Pearson included an interesting discussion of New Zealanders' psychology in a passage that was similar to Chapman's "Fiction and the Social Pattern". The notion was that in reaction to the puritan ethic of work, self-denial and guilt, Pakeha tended to envy the Maori's freedom from moral restraint and pressure to work doggedly towards a secure future. In literature this was expressed through the stereotype of the "Hori",[275] which could only be viewed as hiding deep seated Pakeha insecurities. It was Pearson's intention to question why "the Pakeha's secret ideal of lethargy should have to hide under Maori fancy-dress".[276] Exposing this stereotype for what it was,

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[271]ibid, p.225.
[272]ibid, p.227.
[273]ibid.
[274]ibid, p.229.
[275]ibid, p.231.
[276]ibid, pp.231-232.

Pearson located it in the "Hori" of the Half-Gallon Jar,[277] which by 1964 had sold 64,000 copies[278] - a huge circulation for New Zealand's small publishing industry. Underneath the popular stereotype of the easy-going Maori lay a "kerbside philosopher of journalism who is spokesman for the concerns of the Philistine urban Pakeha of several income groups".[279] Rather than being a symbolic representation of actual Maori culture, this character railed against long-winded M.P.'s, mothers-in-law, formal dressing, Shakespearean drama and modern art. Like Chapman, Pearson viewed the stereotype as an unconscious hankering on the part of Pakeha for freedom from their repressive cultural norms and a deep-seated fear of sophisticated human expression. Such criticism was biting and directly oriented towards the complacent Pakeha middle-class who had arrogantly assumed that New Zealand had been a benevolent caregiver to Maori since the inception of settlement.

Dispensing with Pakeha writing about Maori in this unrepentant manner, Pearson moved on to "Writing by Maoris".[280] Between 1955 and 1969 no more than one book and fifty prose pieces had been written by Maori writers, and almost all of them had been published in Te Ao Hou. Unlike Landfall and other little magazines set up through purely private initiatives, Te Ao Hou had been established by the Maori Affairs Department in 1952 to help foster the development of Maori literature.[281] Although there were obvious similarities to Pakeha writing, Pearson felt there were a number of ways in which they differed. Specifically, there were no stories of Pakeha attempting to obstruct an inter-racial marriage and only two examples made use of the supernatural. No stories made use of Maori belief or disbelief in tapu and no attempt was made to make Maori speak a different style of English to Pakeha. The distinct implication was that previous Pakeha writers had done a great disservice to the

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[277]Hori; cartoons by Frank St. Bruno, The Half-Gallon Jar (Auckland: Sporting Life Publications, 1962).
[278]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.231.
[279]ibid, pp.231.
[280]ibid, pp.245ff.
[281]Jane McRae, 'Maori Literature: A Survey', in Sturm, ed., The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English, p.16.

development of an equal and respectful relationship between the two races. Indeed, Pearson's essay represented an implicit rejoinder to other writers of literary critique in the period who had failed to recognise (and stand up for) the indigenous culture of New Zealand.

For Pearson, however, the major differences between Pakeha and Maori writing were simply due to a difference in tone. When characters were depicted as comic, for example, they were comic as people, not as Maori. Pearson felt an underlying tone of acceptance and belonging, of an insider's view. Any sense of "Maoriness" was related more to a sense of responsibility to a common culture than surface stereo-types. Significantly, the dominant theme in this Maori writing was a comparison of the old Maori life and the new, urban Maori life that was fast becoming the dominant mode of experience. At times Pearson felt that there were attempts to reconcile the old and new attitudes, but usually writers were content to set old and new side by side in stories that could be described as "sketches or essays".[282] Another major difference identified by Pearson was a more lyrical prose style that was more able to convey the passion and richness of Maori culture without lapsing into romanticism. Superficial observations upon Maori culture appeared to Pearson to be absent, being replaced by an awareness of the various subtleties of Maori culture on a practical, human level:

> Mahu could feel herself losing. She knew she was failing. There seemed no more will-power left. No urge to work, no inspiration. In her letters home she felt she was lying to her people, and living the life of a hypocrite. So what did she do about it? What would anyone else do? It was easy to choose dances and parties before study . . .[283]

Riki Erihi was identified by Pearson as a significant Maori writer at the time, and he represented for him the dominant attributes of what Maori writers had to offer, specifically, "the lyricism, the fundamental seriousness, the dramatic presentation, the

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[282]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.246.
[283]Peter Sharples, cited in, Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.247.

passion"[284] and the ability to blend the Maori and European traditions. Pearson also appreciated Tuwhare's socialist perspective that enabled him to cope with the dual issues of internationalism and the urban world.[285] In a comment that betrayed Pearson's own ingrained scepticism of Pakeha values, his only criticism of Tuwhare was that he was frequently naive in assuming that goodwill between the races was all that was required for success.[286] In terms of dramatic devices, Pearson suggested that Tuwhare had a uniquely Maori ability to personify and dramatise natural forces. Much of "The Maori and Literature" suggested that Pearson placed a lot of faith in the ability of Maori writers to deepen New Zealand literature, and raise it to a significant and unique standard in the context of international literature. His identification of Tuwhare as a dominant player in this trend was timely, and comparable to McCormick's identification of Frank Sargeson earlier in the century. Literary critique has traditionally been a mode of writing that picks up on nascent trends in New Zealand literature and brings them into public view, fulfilling an extremely important role for writers and audience alike. In a very direct statement at the close of the essay, Pearson suggested that "New Zealand life will be greatly enriched when we can learn to see ourselves and the country through the eyes of a number of Maori writers and it may well be that Maori can help us find ways we wouldn't have found for ourselves".[287] Pearson was diametrically opposed to writers like Allen Curnow who refused to attempt to integrate Maori culture into New Zealand literature out of fear that it would appear trite and was essentially an impossible project for Pakeha to attempt. He pointed out that this omission had led to the treatment of Maori topics in New Zealand literature by old fashioned hacks. It must be noted, however, that in these observations there lay the seeds of a bi-cultural theory that future New Zealanders were to view as naive and prejudiced in its own right.

Bill Pearson was similar in his aims and method to Robert Chapman. Both writers employed a methodology that was heavily indebted to sociology, and used literature in order to critique New Zealand puritanism. Their stance was symptomatic of a

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[284]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.252.
[285]ibid, p.254.
[286]ibid, p.255.
[287]ibid, p.256.

period in New Zealand history when writers and artists felt ostracised and under-appreciated by their culture, and literary critique provided an excellent means of putting their views across. Pearson's critique was in large part educative, predicated upon a thesis that asserted the moral failure of New Zealand society to provide a fair and equitable culture for its original inhabitants. The strong racial tone of "The Maori and Literature" was in itself symptomatic of a dawning awareness throughout New Zealand society that treatment of Maori issues had been haphazard and at times racist. Literature provided Pearson with an excellent means by which these issues could be both raised and analysed; the "terrible learning" of critique was used to point out serious failures throughout New Zealand society. Moreover, Pearson felt that literature was a means by which New Zealand society could be redefined. Like Holcroft, Chapman and Baxter, Pearson highlighted the belief that artistic endeavour was the only means by which New Zealand could be drawn away from its puritanical past. "The Maori and Literature" did not appear to attain towards art, however. Although highly self-reflexive, the essay was a direct critique of New Zealand society, and did not contain the high rhetoric and artistic flourishes of Holcroft or Baxter. "The Maori and Literature" was direct, angry and didactic. New Zealand literature had suggested to Pearson a darker side to New Zealand culture that was hypocritical and blind.

It is interesting that Kendrick Smithyman and Bill Pearson stand side by side in this particular historical account, because they were so diametrically opposed in critical terms. Whereas Smithyman espoused a critical philosophy that was heavily indebted to the New Critics, Pearson felt compelled to suggest those same critics had committed "heresy, if one can use the word . . .".[288] His prose was closer in style to Virginia Woolf (who wrote the straight-forward book The Common Reader) and George Orwell who Pearson admired "for his plainness and persistence and bluntness".[289] This was reflective of the depth of tradition now represented in literary critique as a mode of writing in New Zealand and the permeation of the mode by the wider concerns of global intellectual society. Despite being a relatively small and closed literary-critical circle, New Zealand's critics of criticism had traversed the

[288]Calder, 'An Interview with Bill Pearson', p.72.
[289]ibid.

entire field of critical philosophy in truly international terms. Although opinion had splintered since the development of the mode during World War Two, the tradition had filled out and real progress was being made on a variety of fronts. The next phase of the tradition, from 1970 until 1983, witnessed an even greater expansion into the global intellectual scene, and a more confident assertion of individual critical vision. After the splintering of opinion there appeared to be no way back to consensus.

Chapter Four: 'The Triumph of Individualism 1970-1983'

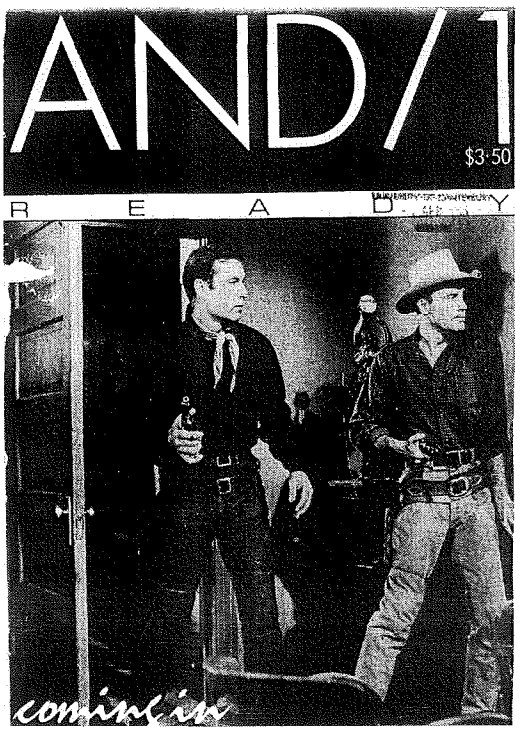

Figure 4

"Ready – Coming In", And/1, 1983.

A distinct shift occurred in the history of literary critique with the onset of the nineteen-seventies. Primarily the shift was centred around a re-orientation of focus towards more international (and especially post-colonial) concerns. The narrow focus of the preceding decades (which centred on a provincial exploration of problems endemic to New Zealand) gave way to a broader treatment of New Zealand literature in relation to global concerns. Although the period from 1945 to 1970 had seen a splintering of opinion, there had still been a general trend towards the collective development of New Zealand literature and an implicit understanding that diversity of opinion was a healthy sign. After 1970, however, the stakes were raised as New Zealand was more fully integrated into the growing international community and "moral, racial and even social harmony began to fray . . .".[1] The practitioners of literary critique began to voice their concerns more vociferously, arguing amongst themselves and raising their prose to the point of polemic. The year after the death of

[1]Belich, Paradise Reforged, p.398.

James K. Baxter in 1972 saw the publication of Wystan Curnow's anthology Essays on New Zealand Literature, which the author described as "a fairly coherent collection of superior criticism".[2] From 1970 onwards New Zealand critics began to search further afield for their content, most of them openly writing for an international audience and taking as a given the fact that New Zealand was a part of the burgeoning global environment. Much of this attitude must be attributed to broader global concerns that impacted upon New Zealand's cultural outlook; notably Britain's entrance into the European Economic Community in 1972, the oil crisis of 1973-1974, dawn raids on Pacific Islanders in 1976 prompted by concerns over high rates of migration and the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement, which voiced serious concerns over apartheid in South Africa and can be seen as a precursor to the violence associated with the 1981 Springbok Tour.[3] With the onset of the global post-modern culture, authors of literary critique found themselves looking outwards at the world instead of being locked into the coherence offered by a shared predicament. Debates took on a new significance and the essays developed a more confident tone that implied the primacy of individual critical vision. Indeed, the critiques proffered between 1970 and 1983 by Wystan Curnow, C. K. Stead, Keri Hulme and Roger Horrocks had only one connecting theme: individualism.

i] Wystan Curnow, High Culture in a Small Province, 1973.

The central text of this period in the history of New Zealand literary critique was written by Wystan Curnow, the son of Allen Curnow. Wystan Curnow was born in Christchurch in 1939 (Allen was writing for the Press) before his family shifted to Auckland, where he attended Takapuna Grammar School and Auckland University.[4] After graduating from Auckland University Curnow took the "unprecedented"[5] decision of studying for his doctorate in America. At the University of Pennsylvania

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[2]Wystan Curnow, 'Preface' to Wystan Curnow, ed., Essays on New Zealand Literature (Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), p.vii.
[3]Keith Sinclair, 'Hard Times', in Keith Sinclair, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.356.
[4]Sarah Shieff, 'Wystan Curnow', in Robinson and Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p.124.
[5]Roger Horrocks, 'Interview: Roger Horrocks and Friends Talk With Wystan Curnow', Landfall 177 (March 1991), p.11.

he focused on the role of Herman Melville in American and post-colonial literature.[6] After appointments at the University of Rochester and the Division of Humanities at York University in Toronto, Curnow returned to New Zealand. In 1970 he joined the Auckland English Department as a lecturer, where he was instrumental in developing a new syllabus that included contemporary American literature.[7] From this time on, Curnow came to be "a prominent advocate for the avant-garde"[8]in New Zealand, publishing poetry and criticism in new post-modern literary periodicals like Parallax, And, Splash and Antic. The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature describes Curnow as a "critic, curator and poet . . ."[9] but he is also a noted short story writer and won the Katherine Mansfield Award for Fiction in 1971. Perhaps because of his interest in artistic "performance"[10] generally, Curnow's career has been (ironically, as will be seen) unusually versatile, moving between academic, literary critic, poet, fiction writer, artist and curator.

Curnow's artistic work presents the most vivid example of his relationship to the avant-garde world, particularly through his collaboration with the American based (New Zealand born) artist Billy Apple. Curnow met Billy Apple in New York during the nineteen-sixties after Apple (born Barrie Bates, Auckland 1935) had completed studies at the Royal College of Art in London, and over time the pair developed an interesting artistic strategy.[11] The strategy focused on the relationship between artist, critic, curator and audience in an effort to blur all distinctions between them. Paintings would only be painted *after* a review had been given or a bill of sale completed (indeed one work is simply a large receipt for itself) in a strongly avante-garde attack on the art commodity market in general. The approach was very successful and attracted attention in artistic circles internationally that were becoming increasingly oriented towards artistic practices of this kind. Curnow did not begin his collaboration with Apple until 1979, however. In the earlier stages of his career he was more centred on literary pursuits and the realities of academic life in New

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[6]ibid.
[7]Williams, 'Literary Scholarship', p.720.
[8]Shieff, 'Wystan Curnow', p.125.
[9]ibid, p.124.
[10]Horrocks, 'Interview', p.10.
[11]ibid, p.13.

Zealand.

"High Culture in a Small Province" occupies a central position in New Zealand literary history but (like many of the essays examined in this thesis) has been widely misinterpreted over the years. The essay appeared in Essays on New Zealand Literature (1973), an anthology of critical writing edited by Wystan Curnow after he returned to New Zealand from America. In his preface he suggested that the main purpose of the anthology was "to make available to readers some of the better criticism of New Zealand literature"[12] that had appeared over the years. Initial reception of the work was positive, with commentators viewing the anthology as a useful and necessary adjunct to the development of university courses on New Zealand literature. A. R. Wells went so far as to suggest that it owed its publication to this development and that Essays on New Zealand Literature had been "designed as a text"[13] for this very purpose. Curnow's preface suggests otherwise, however, because he noted that it was more an effort to combine into one volume a mode of essay writing that differed from book reviewing in its breadth and depth of subject matter, leading to criticism that was a "more likely vehicle for substantial and convincing criticism".[14] By favouring "interpretation and exposition over opinion and instant evaluation . . .",[15] Curnow felt that the essays provided New Zealand literature with a more sophisticated and open mode of discourse.

By 1973 the profusion of book reviewing in New Zealand had led to a confused situation in which direction was lacking and cliquish arguments predominated over useful critical insights.[16] Essays on New Zealand Literature was the first effort to

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[12]Curnow, 'Preface', p.vii.
[13]A. R. Wells, review of Wystan Curnow, ed., Essays on New Zealand Literature, in Landfall 107 (September 1973), p.250.
[14]Curnow, 'Preface', p.vii.
[15]ibid.
[16]E. H. McCormick, Letter to Landfall, in Landfall 77 (March 1966), p.105: "Sir: I wonder if I am alone among your readers in regretting a feature of *Landfall* in recent years - the book review that is little more than an occasion for the display of animus or egotism. The reviewer is usually a junior university teacher who has himself published nothing of consequence, and he tends to treat works of the imagination - indeed books of any kind - as if they were student exercises to be marked, graded, and finally dismissed with faint praise or derision".

identify the mode of essay writing dealt with in this thesis - essays that differ in aim and scope from book reviewing by offering criticism of criticism "in the hope of straightening things out".[17] That half of the texts included in Essays on New Zealand Literature are also examined here should suggest the degree of continuity between the two approaches. In identifying literary critique (albeit without providing a specific label), Curnow's aim was to provide readers a mode of essay writing that New Zealand critics had increasingly turned to in an effort to make sense of some of the more complex questions posed by New Zealand's cultural situation.[18] The central impetus behind this approach was provided by the American critic Morse Peckham who called for greater levels of self-consciousness in criticism:

> What we need is an understanding of what we do . . . If we have an understanding of what we are in fact engaged in doing, we can perhaps decide what we ought not to do, or possibly learn how to do better what we appear to be doing well, or at least what appears to be on the right track. We can hope to jettison a great many modes of interpretation and innovate more adequate ones. We can perhaps hope to accumulate something reliable instead of seeing every generation or so the dissipation of what we have accumulated.[19]

The only previously unpublished essay in Essays on New Zealand Literature

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Rob Jackaman, 'A Survey', Landfall 122 (June 1977), pp.101-102: "Finally . . . there is the problem of informed criticism in New Zealand. How does a writer get responsible creative criticism of his work? . . . . From reviews? . . . hardly: the larger literary periodicals go some of the way towards supplying cogent in-depth criticism, but for the rest its mainly a mention of title, publisher, price, and little more . . . . I suspect, then, that there's *no* reliable source of systematic literary criticism in New Zealand which could help writers to avoid the difficulties I've mentioned above . . . This isn't really anybody's fault - I'm sure, given the time available, everybody does his or her best; but there's still a gap in the literary structure of the country, or so it seems to me".

[17]T. S. Eliot, cited in, R. P. Blackmur, 'In the Hope of Straightening Things Out', in R. P. Blackmur, The Lion and the Honeycomb: Essays in Solicitude and Critique (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1956), p.164.

[18]Curnow, 'Preface', p.vii.

[19]Morse Peckham, 'Literary Interpretation as Conventionalized Verbal Behaviour', in Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism, p.348.

was Wystan Curnow's own contribution, "High Culture in a Small Province".[20] The key to an understanding of the essay lay in Peckham's 1970 collection of essays The Triumph of Romanticism,[21] which provided the critical apparatus and much of the content of "High Culture in a Small Province". Like many other authors of literary critique examined in this thesis, Curnow was attempting to import recent international theory into the critical discourse of New Zealand. When overlaid with Curnow's own position as a recently returned academic, the result was unpalatable to many of his readers, who found the essay elitist and opaque. The Landfall review of September 1973 went so far as to suggest that "[o]ne can see the truth of his analysis and still be offended by it".[22] When placed beside Peckham's work, however, "High Culture in a Small Province" contained lucid insights into the nature of artistic behaviour and its relationship to the cultural scene. New Zealand readers could not get past surface tensions that appeared to them to undermine all that had been striven for in New Zealand letters since World War Two.

"High Culture in a Small Province" was predicated upon the insight that "the study of literature boils down to the study of the behaviour of authors in their cultural situation . . .".[23] Rather than searching for external generic markers (such as essay, novel, play, poem or any possible mixture of these) or internal authorial devices (such as point of view, use of metaphor or rhyme patterns), Curnow chose the essays in Essays on New Zealand Literature on the basis of their function within society, on the particular rhetorical stand they took in relation to their culture. Influenced by Peckham's behavioural approach to literary history, Curnow attempted to publish essays that would highlight the psychological implications of writing in New Zealand rather than simply focusing on the internal merits or failures of particular texts. It is at this point that the modus operandi of both Curnow's anthology and essay became apparent. He attempted to identify a new mode of essay writing in New Zealand based upon the cultural role that it adopted rather than its ability to provide closure to long-standing critical arguments or pass judgement on particular authors. There could be

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[20]Wystan Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', in Curnow, ed., Essays on New Zealand Literature, pp.155-171.
[21]Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism.
[22]Wells, review of Essays, p.253.
[23]Peckham, 'Theory of Criticism', in Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism, p.391.

few approaches to the history of literary criticism that better reflect the orientation of this thesis as well, because Curnow's approach (after Peckham) enables the critic to move outside the endless debates over the relative merits of cultural nationalism or "The South Island Myth", New Criticism or employment of the symbolic imagination. Rather, the focus shifts towards the uses to which literary criticism is put within society as a whole; what functions it fulfills and what implications it holds for the development of literature as a socially useful tool:

> To begin with, not only do I assert that the only proper object of investigation is artistic behaviour, but also that such behaviour is most usefully considered as a social role, patterned, learned, culturally transmitted, governed by rules, and elicited by the semiotic stimuli of a particular class of situation. A work of art, then, is any artefact in the presence of which an individual plays a particular social role.[24]

"High Culture in a Small Province" was an attempt to step out of the vicious circle of literary-critical argument and counter-argument and view New Zealand literature through the lens of the behavioural sciences. The power of such an analysis only becomes apparent when it is noted that the implications Curnow drew from his approach struck to the core of New Zealand's egalitarian ethos and appeared to challenge all that had gone before it. Curnow's time in America clearly had an impact on his intellectual perspective. Temporarily freed from the constraints of New Zealand society, he returned with a determination to force a redefinition of his country's cultural pattern and inculcate a greater willingness to search out the more difficult questions posed by New Zealand culture.

In order to assimilate Peckham's ideas to the New Zealand context, Curnow put forward his own tripartite division of cultural roles; "primary, secondary and tertiary".[25] The division was largely based upon Peckham's insight into the behaviourally determined nature of artistic roles within society, but Curnow altered

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[24]Peckham, 'Art and Disorder', in Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism, p.257.
[25]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.157.

Peckham's terminology to make it better fit the New Zealand context. The primary role for Curnow involved "problem-exposure"[26] through the writing of novels, plays and poems and the creation of works of art; the secondary was a service role that included university teachers who trained students to perform primary roles later in life; and the tertiary role was "the perceiver's or consumer's role".[27] It was the relationship between these three cultural roles that interested Curnow, and in particular the problem of maintaining an adequate division between the roles in a small country. Curnow's main point was that New Zealand's short history and shallow cultural base meant "that there is, in one sense, not much to be known about the country and, in another, that remarkably little *is* known about it".[28] Moreover, in concentrating solely upon book reviews, New Zealand literary critics had been unable to identify the more ambiguous and complex features of their culture.[29] In aesthetic terms New Zealand literature and art appeared empty of real sophistication, because it was practised in the main by amateurs and dilettantes who simply did not have either the ability, the insulation or the support necessary to search out the truly complex psychological, emotional and behavioural questions - the identification of which mark "High Culture":

> The highest level of culture is marked first, by extreme richness; it contains in solution innumerable ambiguities and ambivalences and puzzles and problems. Anyone who lives at that level is as much involved in discovering and creating problems as he is in solving them. Second, therefore, the life of members of the highest cultural levels requires psychic insulation for only that makes problem-exposure tolerable.[30]

Morse Peckham's notion of "psychic insulation"[31] is useful for an understanding of "High Culture in a Small Province", because it was Curnow's use of this term that led

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[26]ibid.
[27]ibid.
[28]ibid, p.156.
[29]ibid.
[30]Morse Peckham, cited in, Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.155.
[31]Peckham, 'Art and Disorder', p.264.

his critics to accuse him of intellectual snobbery and elitism. The term relates to the primary role only, because it was this level that Curnow felt was undermined through connection with the lower levels. This had been spoken of much earlier by Bill Pearson in 1952, and Curnow quoted directly from "Fretful Sleepers" to make his point:

> in London honest men can, and usually do, avoid or escape from the society of the imposters. In New Zealand many an honest man has been soured, emasculated or turned showman because he cannot get away from the poky little minds that milch and destroy him.[32]

Curnow went on to add to Pearson's thoughts with a passage that appeared to be borne out of bitter experience:

> Unless he is careful, most of his friends will be, as Pearson suggests, amateurs, snobs, men who parade a promise they will never fulfill. Sad men, drop-outs, men who lack a certain seriousness. The cumulative impact of these proximities is by no means negligible. Withstanding it is, in fact, one of the peculiar features of the talented artist's or intellectual's experience of alienation in this country.[33]

Interestingly (and it points to the pervasive utility of "High Culture in a Small Province"), Curnow's analysis of culture in New Zealand pointed specifically to the means by which this situation could be redressed - and it lay in greater levels of psychic-insulation for artists and intellectuals involved in primary roles that involve complex problem-exposure. Curnow was quick to point out that the term need not be taken negatively:

> The expression 'psychic insulation' is less odd than it seems; we recognise the need for it when we keep quiet in libraries.

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[32]Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers', p.25.
[33]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.164.

> If, like Yeats, we have a fascination with what's difficult, with puzzles, we too may be drawn to towers, old country houses, celibate solitude or their equivalents.[34]

Curnow pointed out early in "High Culture in a Small Province" that these conditions had been difficult to satisfy even in developed countries like France, Britain and the United States and acknowledged the extreme difficulty of satisfying them in countries like New Zealand, Canada and Australia. Nevertheless, through his tripartite division of culture he proposed that the failure to promote psychic insulation for New Zealand's more talented artists and intellectuals lay with the secondary level, with university teachers and other "middle men of culture . . ."[35] that were so taxed by the various demands placed upon them that they lapsed into amateurism and began to pander to the lower cultural level of consumer markets and popular opinion, at the expense of truly sophisticated problem-exposure. Curnow argued that people employed in these secondary cultural roles in New Zealand had so many demands placed upon them that they found it difficult to provide adequate insulation for the talent at their disposal and were themselves forced to engage in various subsidiary roles that promoted versatility at the expense of artistic or intellectual sophistication. Indeed for Curnow, "versatility"[36] and "amateurism"[37] went hand in hand, and he viewed both as a direct result of New Zealand's shallow history and lack of professionalism and specialisation at all levels of culture. There was a tone of youthful idealism in "High Culture in a Small Province" that appeared bent on shaking New Zealand's shallow cultural pattern into the postmodern world. This was in spite of the fact that Curnow was well aware of the critical vitriol that usually followed such declarations in New Zealand.

The main thrust of "High Culture in a Small Province" aimed to better familiarise New Zealanders with the extent of their cultural "poverty".[38] After several years

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[34]ibid, p.155.
[35]ibid, p.157.
[36]ibid, p.159.
[37]ibid, p.162.
[38]ibid, p.156.

studying in America, Curnow returned with an angry disposition that refused to be lulled into a false sense of security by his "relatively classless, homogeneous, welfare state, a democracy zealously egalitarian",[39] implying that New Zealand culture was complacent and static. While recognising that New Zealand did have the requisite structure to support a high culture, demonstrated in The Listener, the National Film Unit, a professional orchestra, a government cultural fund and a public library service, Curnow noted that these elements were all government funded and largely connected with the 1940 Centennial Celebrations. Only Landfall could claim to be a private initiative and this too had only survived with the aid of the State Literary Fund. His concern was not so much that the structure of a high culture had been developed, but that it had been erected rapidly and recently, placing unsatisfactory demands on those who involved themselves in it:

> And, as I have just argued, those demands will be all the greater at a time when there is a rapid increase in the organisations and institutions of high culture. New Zealand artists and intellectuals are unusually versatile - the true specialists we export. But if they are playing a multiplicity of roles then it follows that they will be able to solve and generate fewer problems of significance in the culture than if they were playing more specialised roles . . . . if the culture has a built-in tendency to *demand* versatility, as this culture certainly has, then, the chances are that the redundant instead of the rich, the reductively simple instead of the subtly complex, will prevail.[40]

Curnow's extension of this argument towards his claims surrounding the pervasive amateurism in New Zealand culture was based around a discussion of A. R. D. Fairburn's career, and in particular his assertion in his essay "The Culture Industry" (1956) that New Zealand artists and intellectuals should attain to the Greek ideal of the "natural aristocrat"[41] who in Renaissance fashion equipped himself to excel in all facets of life. "Poet, painter, social critic, art critic and historian, pamphleteer and

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[39]ibid, p.157.
[40]ibid, p.159 (Curnow's emphasis).
[41]A. R. D. Fairburn, 'The Culture Industry', Landfall 39 (September 1956), p.199.

literary critic, he was also a good sportsman and a great talker".[42] Curnow argued that Fairburn's position as "an exemplary New Zealand personality"[43] was based as much on his undoubted talent as his versatility and ability to adopt various cultural roles. Rather than judge Fairburn on the basis of his artistic production, Curnow used his career in order "to raise awkward questions about his versatility".[44] In particular, Curnow asked whether Fairburn's versatility was not so much related to his conception of the natural aristocrat, but "in good part but a rationalisation of the versatility forced on the New Zealander by the thinness and recentness of his culture and the absence of psychic insulation?"[45] A recent reappraisal of Fairburn by C. K. Stead had called into question the quality of both his poetry and prose, and despite refusing to engage in the debate, Curnow clearly intimated that Fairburn's talent was diffused by the demands for versatility thrust upon him by his culture.

Despite the fact that Curnow felt the pressure to be versatile had eased in the years prior to 1973, he was led to state that "my own generation is not free of the old pressures".[46] Curnow's contemporaries were often forced to play multiple roles as art historian, art critic, art journalist and gallery administrator at the same time (if poet, artist and university teacher were added to this list it would neatly sum up Curnow's own career interests). This resulted in an inevitable lack of specialisation and psychic insulation. Two significant elements were cited by Curnow as being directly related to this demand for versatility: premature success and amateurism. Specifically, Curnow pointed out that literary or artistic success came far too easily in New Zealand, with two published books making one an established writer and a few paintings exhibited in a handful of galleries making one an established artist. "An artist can be nationally known in his twenties, a grand old man in his thirties and a virtual unknown beyond these shores".[47] Moreover, unlike more established cultures, the person who adopted the primary role could not expect to continue to develop beyond his initial success and

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[42]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.161.
[43]ibid.
[44]ibid.
[45]ibid.
[46]ibid.
[47]ibid, p.162.

was often forced through isolation to become versatile and branch out into different areas where there was still room for personal development, because

> if he has received what little useful criticism the culture can offer and most of the psychic insulation he can hope for, then his development will become increasingly lonely and arduous. There may even be no growth at all; he may just give up . . . . the temptation remains to do again what one has done before, or to change one's role, to be precocious and become 'promising' again in a new field.[48]

The lack of psychic insulation at the higher cultural levels thus became dangerously insidious. Not only did it reduce the ability of New Zealand to reveal itself through sophisticated problem-exposure, but it stunted the growth of the few who had genuine talent through premature success. In Curnow's analysis this situation was compounded through the development of amateurism, which lent only inadequate criticism and a small-minded disregard for the entire lifespan of an artist or intellectual. Initial success was often only a prompt for more vicious and amateurish critical attacks. "High Culture in a Small Province" was actually prompted by a government commissioned report by Hamish Keith which appeared in The Listener during 1966, in which the author noted that

> [t]he amateur is fairly entrenched in the cultural life and administration of this country, and has been so since the end of the nineteenth century. Far from providing a sympathetic audience or patron for serious art, the amateur reaction to its growth in New Zealand has ranged from direct obstruction to neurotic hostility.[49]

Curnow appended to Keith's quote instances of public controversies such as the refusal of the McDougall Gallery to accept the gift of a Francis Hodgkins in 1949 and the controversy surrounding the 1964 Poetry Yearbook, where the contents were

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[48]ibid.
[49]Hamish Keith, cited in Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.163.

deemed to be on the margins of public taste. Similarly, Curnow noted that a recent attempt to establish a regular arts magazine faltered while at the same time women's magazines boomed and a monthly with broader tastes had a circulation of 10,000. Meanwhile, the correspondence columns of The Listener "have been the nearest thing to a national intellectual forum the country has had".[50] In light of the general cultural mood around 1973 (suggested in these examples) it might appear surprising that Curnow's calls for psychic insulation, intellectual sophistication and greater artistic specialisation prompted calls of snobbery; ironically the very thing he was trying to weed out of New Zealand culture.[51] In Curnow's analysis it was this very amateurism that acted to erode the necessary gap between cultural levels, creating a vicious circle that actively discouraged the development of specialisation, professionalism and deep cultural insight.

Perhaps in anticipation of the criticism that "High Culture in a Small Province" was to elicit, Curnow introduced Franz Fanon's book Black Skin White Masks (1967)[52] into his discussion.[53] While the introduction of Fanon "may seem odd, trivial even"[54] there should be no doubt that Curnow used him to great effect in his analysis, even if this has been lost on many readers. Fanon was from the French Antilles and wrote psychologically oriented cultural criticism aimed at diffusing the reverse racism he felt to be endemic in his homeland, especially in relation to the development of a post-colonial consciousness. Fanon's point was that educated blacks in the French Antilles consistently undermined their own identity by moving to France in order to

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[50]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.163..

[51]The irony lies in the fact that it was the amateurs who were the snobs (rather than the proponents of high culture who were looked down upon).

[52]Franz Fanon, Black Skin White Masks (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

[53]Rohit Barot and John Bird, 'Racialization: The Genealogy and Critique of a Concept', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 24:4 (July 2001), pp.612-613:
"What makes Fanon's work so important is not only the links established between the structure of colonialism and aspects of psychology, and emodiment, but also the extent to which a theorization from the periphery successfully avoids the almost abstracted way in which much sociology tackles the issues of 'race' and racism. For Fanon, there is a racialization of body and psyche, what he sees as the epidermalization of 'race'; this epidermalization is a far more profound and violently harmful process of othering than that involved in discourses of cultural difference".

[54]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.165.

become "cultured". On their return they found themselves estranged from their own society. With no cultural identity to speak of, those of talent were forced to move to France to further their education, and on their return found themselves ostracised and labelled snobs by their countrymen:

> if the newcomer soon gets the floor, it is because they were *waiting for him*. First of all to observe his manner: The slightest departure is seized on, picked apart, and in less than forty-eight hours it has been retailed all over Fort-de-France. There is no forgiveness when one who claims a superiority falls below the standard. Let him say, for instance, "It was not my good fortune, when in France, to observe mounted policemen," and he is done for. Only one choice remains to him: throw off his "Parisianism" or die of ridicule.[55]

Suspicion fell on people returning after being educated in France, but Fanon also pointed out the deeply ironic situation in which those same middle classes who would watch out for signs of continental education would be careful not to use their native Creole dialect, in the hope of attaining to a level of sophistication only found in France. Indeed, the middle classes of Antilles

> never speak Creole except to their servants. In school the children of Martinique are taught to scorn the dialect. One avoids *Creolisms*. Some families completely forbid the use of Creole, and mothers ridicule their children for speaking it.[56]

The relationship between the experience of the French Antilles and that of New Zealand may appear to be oblique at first glance, but as Fanon noted himself, "the same behaviour patterns obtain in every race that has been subjected to colonization".[57] The issue is one of snobbery. Curnow developed this line of argument

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[55]Fanon, Black Skin White Masks, pp.24-25 (Fanon's emphasis).
[56]ibid, p.20 (Fanon's emphasis).
[57]ibid, p.25.

through recourse to dialect, because it was his contention that New Zealanders tended to view the "mother tongue"[58] or Received Pronunciation (RP) as the "civilising tongue",[59] noting instances where the developing New Zealand dialect was seen as uncivilised and even dangerous to the intellectual health of the nation[60]. Charles Brasch as editor of Landfall was not above this opinion and held the view that the development of the New Zealand dialect was in some way implicit in the kind of cultural denigration that ended in situations like Vietnam (!). As Curnow pointed out, ". . . Brasch's thinking is here shabby and naive",[61] but it pointed to just the kind of snobbery that Curnow was alluding to in his argument against amateurism, namely, that one of the effects of colonisation was to lend New Zealanders an inferiority complex whereby anything produced in New Zealand was seen as second-rate in comparison to the much vaunted cultural history of "home". In New Zealand (like the French Antilles), the ironic circumstance developed whereby possession of RP as a dialect was all that was necessary to indicate proximity to the mother country's culture, thereby allowing wanton and amateurish denigration of any local product. Received Pronunciation became the mark of dilettantes who felt that their diction gave them precedence as judges of aesthetic quality (this despite the suspicion held of any artistic or intellectual exile who returned from "home" with new ideas or pretensions of heightened aesthetic sensibility). Amateur critics in effect buttressed this complex by refusing to admit the desirability (or even possibility) of a truly independent high culture in New Zealand.

An artist returning from exile (like Curnow himself) could not claim to be in any real sense a New Zealander. Any "sophistication" attained while overseas was viewed as a shallow addition to his personality that had no place on his native ground. Specialised people that were exported were not welcomed back because on their return they would feign to act as cultural equals to the colonising culture, thereby offending the weak sensibilities of their countrymen whose only security was in their (increasingly remote, yet "pure") cultural lineage. Curnow then went on to suggest

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[58]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.165.
[59]ibid.
[60]See: Elizabeth Gordon, 'That Colonial Twang', in D. Novitz and W. Willmot, eds, Culture and Identity in New Zealand (Wellington: GP Books, 1989), pp.84-85.
[61]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.166.

that the notion "that a command of the language is some sort of guarantee of right thinking"[62] was fallacious, and typical of critics like Eliot, Tate and the Leavisites who all to some degree or another lamented the increasing penetration of high culture by mass language and popular culture. Curnow was not advocating psychic insulation as a prompt to intellectual elitism, but as a prompt to a better functioning of culture at all levels. Rather than advocating the penetration of lower cultural levels by higher ones (as in Leavisite thought), or higher cultural levels by lower ones (as in Tate and the New Criticism), Curnow, like Peckham, was simply advocating a more realistic attitude towards the products of High Culture. Any penetrating analysis of "High Culture in a Small Province" should make this point explicit.

Although the various sublimations involved make the linguistic example slightly absurd, the effects of alienation from the mother country become clear. It is related to an envy of the cultural depth of the colonising nation and an attendant belief that artists and intellectuals in New Zealand were incapable of developing an aesthetic that reflected a "true" cultural experience - this, indeed should be viewed as the "provincial" attitude that has been so commented upon but never precisely defined. Like McCormick during the nineteen-forties and many that followed in his wake, Curnow was exploring the dual themes of exile and alienation. In line with his broader argument, Curnow moved back into his discussion of primary, secondary and tertiary roles at this point, citing Terry Sturm's comment that writers in New Zealand seemed wary of adopting secondary roles and as a result of this had "increase[d] the already obvious gap between literature and the life of society".[63] The comment was easy enough to understand in a society generally apathetic about literature and the arts. Why should artists and intellectuals not make themselves more accessible to their public and thereby ease the passage of their art into society? Why, in other words, should they attain to the heights of English culture when their circumstances clearly indicated this was impossible? Charles Brasch and J. C. Reid endorsed Sturm's comment, and Curnow pointed out that it had been a commonly held opinion since the inception of New Zealand literary criticism. Holcroft wrote that the emergence of an alienated intellectual elite would be the worst thing for New Zealand, producing

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[62]ibid.

[63]Terry Sturm, cited in Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.167.

only the "half-thoughts of Bloomsbury"[64] and a barren aesthetic removed from the actualities of experience. Fairburn saw the development of an "aesthetic world"[65] as a disease that could be traced back to Keats, and viewed State patronage of the arts as a dangerous act that would seal intellectuals off from the real world.[66] Early New Zealand intellectuals (possibly in reaction to the romantic efflatus produced by Kowhai Gold in 1930) held the notion of a rarefied New Zealand aesthetic in contempt, opting instead for social involvement and a general programme of hard-edged cultural nationalism. Curnow's riposte was telling, as he replied that "One has to ask why, in a society in which the gap is already remarkably small there should be pressure to close it?".[67] "High Culture in a Small Province" marked a change in New Zealand letters *towards* intellectual insulation in the light of a deepening cultural pattern and the possibility of significant aesthetic advances. That it so offended many of his contemporary critics is evidence of what people like Curnow were up against at the time. Amateur critics were simply not willing to accept that greater levels of artistic sophistication could enrich New Zealand culture.

Curnow cut to the core of the exile/alienation theme in "High Culture in a Small Province", noting at once the ironies involved in the psychological stance adopted and the fact that the debate actually centred on the legitimacy or otherwise of a local aesthetic. The issue for Curnow was not so much whether New Zealand artists and intellectuals had been alienated from English culture (this had been a facet of all provincial cultures since the Greeks), but whether New Zealand as a nation was ready and able to develop a local aesthetic of a high enough quality to make self-imposed exile a redundant act. As Curnow pointed out, the way out of the problem stemmed directly from the perceived gap between the artist and experience, because it is a local aesthetic (and only a local aesthetic) that can bridge this gap. Curnow used his father as an example of this argument, quoting his insistence that "Reality must be local and special at the point where we pick up the traces . . ."[68] and that "Whatever is true

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[64]Holcroft, The Discovered Isles, p.47.
[65]Fairburn, 'The Culture Industry', p.207.
[66]ibid.
[67]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.167.
[68]Curnow, The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse, p.17.

vision belongs, here, uniquely to the islands of New Zealand".[69] As the younger Curnow revealingly pointed out, there were echoes of Emerson in these comments, when he asked Americans in 1836 "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?"[70] The tradition does not need to be sought in exile back "home", it is an implicit part of New Zealand's cultural identity and no amount of sublimation and low self-esteem will ever change this. The fact that Allen Curnow was the one intellectual of his generation who felt no pressing need to make the pilgrimage to England (he was eventually encouraged to go by administrators of the literary fund), was not so much reflective of a disdain for high culture, as a reflection of a highly developed aesthetic sensibility that could find the hidden traces within himself and relate them in a meaningful manner to his country and its inhabitants. Despite politely distancing his father from any direct involvement in "High Culture in a Small Province" Wystan Curnow pointed out his unique contribution to New Zealand art and aesthetics in lucid terms. Moreover, he announced that New Zealand was already sufficiently developed to sustain a sophisticated High Culture:

> What matters is that the choice places limits on the strategies available; limits which now surely contribute to the thinness of the high culture. The possibility of a New Zealand high culture is, I would guess, no longer at issue. What is, however, is the innovative power of that high culture. And among those strategies excluded are those that most explicitly declare a commitment to innovation and high culture. In so far as the 'aesthetic' attitude represents explicitly the desire for psychic insulation and cultural transcendence it represents those strategies. The desire to widen the gap between the life of the artist, of his art, and the life of society, represents at this point in time the desire to enrich the high culture.[71]

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[69]ibid.
[70]Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Nature', in R. E. Spiller and A. R. Ferguson, eds, The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, vol. 1: Nature, Addresses, and Lectures (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p.7, cited in Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.168.
[71]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.170.

It is perhaps saddening that the "middle-class vulgarisation of Romantic and Victorian poetry . . ."[72] in early twentieth century New Zealand produced such a backlash amongst the writers of the thirties against romanticism and generated such widespread antipathy to the development of a local aesthetic. Curnow argued that intellectual and aesthetic exile was the only possible result. Revealingly, Curnow also pointed out that this backlash against romanticism (in particular) was based around a serious misconception as to just what romanticism was. Proponents of social realism like Fairburn and Sturm would argue that romanticism developed a sickly aesthetic divorced from the socially significant "fact": a situation that was only overturned with the onset of the depression, whereupon artists and intellectuals could finally act as social and cultural therapists and regain a significant social role. Curnow asserted that both Baxter and Holcroft took this stance, the former styling himself as a "messianic prophet",[73] the latter asserting that poets and artists could lead a sick society towards creative health. Whether cast as a messianic prophet or a social therapist, however, these writers never got away from the romantic notion of the poet as "World-Redeemer",[74] and it mattered little whether the notion was clothed in the rarefied aesthetics of Victorian England or the more dour modernity of nineteen-thirties New Zealand. The influence of Peckham's The Triumph of Romanticism was unmistakable here, because he put forward an argument that suggested that romanticism had yet to be transcended. Even the development of Pop Art and post-modernism can be adequately explained through recourse to the concept of romanticism.[75] In short, "High Culture in a Small Province" implied that the entire history of literary criticism in New Zealand (as elsewhere in the world) after the nineteen-thirties was a backlash against romanticism and aesthetics in general that was simply not intellectually justifiable.

Two aspects of "High Culture in a Small Province" require special attention - Curnow's attitude towards aesthetics and his understanding of provincialism. Taken

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[72]ibid, p.169.
[73]ibid.
[74]Peckham, 'Aestheticism to Modernism: Fulfillment or Revolution?', in Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism, p.206.
[75]Peckham, 'The Current Crisis in the Arts: Pop, Op and Mini', in Peckham, The Triumph of Romanticism, pp.231-251.

together these factors signalled a major shift in New Zealand letters away from the tone of cultural nationalism adopted during the nineteen-thirties and further developed between 1940 and 1945. A theory of aesthetics has never been fully articulated in New Zealand but the word has appeared in several important contexts since the Centennial Celebrations in 1940, when Oliver Duff suggested that New Zealanders were so artistically compromised (or "provincial") as to be "aesthetically inarticulate".[76] Mid-century New Zealand critics put the failure to fully articulate a local aesthetic down to a lack of self-esteem borne of provinciality, whereby New Zealand writers and artists would continually ignore the possibility that they might be able to develop insights of greater significance than those generated at "home" in England. Even in the nineteen-forties, however, it was evident to some commentators that the process of building a local aesthetic had begun:

> The younger generation, however, is not satisfied with this attitude. It objects less to "Home" than to a frame of mind this seems to signify, a sort of mother-worship not compatible with vigorous and healthy growth. Indeed both by visitors and New Zealanders themselves, we have been roundly charged with this mother-worship, with still living in a Victorian atmosphere, with tolerating a serious time-lag in the reception and development of ideas. There is a good deal of ground for the charge. We are inclined to be over-imitative, and, like all young communities, we alternate between self-satisfaction and self-depreciation.[77]

Alan Mulgan was writing about the group of writers that comprised the Phoenix generation, and the extension of this group to cultural nationalists like McCormick, Holcroft and Allen Curnow. J. C. Beaglehole made a similar point in 1954 when he suggested that New Zealanders needed to make an "intellectual Declaration of Independence"[78] similar to the one proposed for Americans by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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[76]Oliver Duff, New Zealand Now (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941), p.38.
[77]Alan Mulgan, Literature and Authorship in New Zealand (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1943), p.54.
[78]Beaglehole, 'The New Zealand Scholar', p.237.

the previous century.[79] Both Mulgan and Beaglehole saw in their younger contemporaries a movement towards speaking their own minds, and generally viewed this as a positive movement towards the creation of a local aesthetic. A. R. D. Fairburn made the biggest advances in this area in 1956 when he published "The Culture Industry" in Landfall, an essay that has been frequently revisited in any discussions over New Zealand's aesthetic development. Fairburn was totally opposed to the creation of an insulated aesthetic world like that proposed by Wystan Curnow in 1973. Instead, he used A. N. Whitehead to assert that "aesthetic contemplation"[80] could never "be divorced from the active processes of creation".[81] For Fairburn and his contemporaries any New Zealand aesthetic had to be based on the actualities of experience in New Zealand, because "when carried to the point of excluding any necessary relationship with either an objective world or a society with whom the artist communicates, it leads to the blight of aestheticism against which I am inveighing".[82] Although Fairburn had his detractors (most notably C. K. Stead) this aesthetic stance was the norm right through until the younger Curnow published "High Culture in a Small Province" in 1973. Curnow called for a strengthening of the provincial stance as a means to develop a level of psychic insulation that could protect artists involved in complex problem-exposure from just the sort of experience that Fairburn lauded as essential. Viewing the artistic process through the dual lenses of the behavioural sciences and a kind of "value free"[83] sociology, Wystan Curnow in effect proposed an aesthetic revolt against virtually all his forebears, lauding the abstract, the avant-garde and a theory of art that might allow a sophisticated local aesthetic to be developed. His critics were too harsh and failed to see that he was simply advocating an extension of the aesthetic programme initiated by the likes of Fairburn earlier in the century. In the new intellectual climate of late twentieth century New Zealand, Fairburn's demand for close social contact between artists and their society was not always appropriate - especially when complex problem exposure was being undertaken.

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[79]Emerson, 'Nature', pp.7-45.
[80]Fairburn, 'The Culture Industry', p.198.
[81]ibid.
[82]ibid, p.201.
[83]Talcott Parsons, cited in, Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.164.

Wystan Curnow's essay was ground breaking and perhaps ahead of its time. His insights related to the entirety of New Zealand culture and proposed a way out of a turgid and myopic adherence to art that was aligned towards a homogeneous and boring middle class. His critique was highly focussed towards cultural analysis and had little direct engagement with New Zealand literature, but it should be recognised that the essay represented the motive force behind Essays on New Zealand Literature; it put forward in programmatic fashion a plea for literary critique and further investigation into the relationship between artistic endeavour of all kinds and the New Zealand cultural environment. In this manner, "High Culture in a Small Province" represented a cosmopolitan view of literature and art that demanded engagement with the broader global environment. Curnow was too broad in his artistic interests to laud literature as the highest form of knowledge, but his essay was undoubtedly self-reflexive, educative and oriented towards the development of a new moral attitude towards literature in New Zealand. His direct demand for heightened levels of problem exposure in New Zealand literary criticism was effectively a demand for literary critique. By bravely demanding greater attention to sophisticated problem exposure at the highest cultural levels, Curnow put forward a conception of New Zealand culture that allowed for real advancement and a widespread engagement with international trends in theory and production. His literary critique attempted to educate New Zealanders in a new morality that cherished artistic endeavour and sophisticated problem exposure and his engagement with cultural theory was timely and pointed. In large measure his was a voice in the wilderness, however. While "High Culture in a Small Province" lent literary critique as a tradition solidity and direction, the remainder of the essays to be dealt with in this thesis moved back towards a focus on literature and poetry. The engagement with cultural analysis remained strong, but in the increasingly heated intellectual environment of nineteen-eighties New Zealand generalised programmes of reform gave way to infighting and interpersonal debates.

ii] C. K. Stead, Preliminary: From Wystan to Carlos - Modern and Modernism in Recent New Zealand Poetry, 1979.

C. K. Stead is a very complex figure in New Zealand letters, and he represents an interesting parallel to Wystan Curnow. In effect he is an example of just the kind of

artist Curnow was calling for in "High Culture in a Small Province", at once provincial and capable of writing to an international audience. Indeed in 1979 C. K. Stead was the only literary critic in New Zealand who could claim an international reputation, while at the same time his poetry, fiction and criticism continually attended to issues applicable to the New Zealand situation. His career, moreover, has spanned the entire history of New Zealand literary critique and he has been associated with both the literary mainstream of cultural nationalism and a mode of criticism totally at odds with this. Written in 1979 as an address to the New Zealand Writer's Conference held in Wellington, "Preliminary: From Wystan to Carlos - Modern and Modernism in Recent New Zealand Poetry"[84] generated a "furore"[85] that spanned more than fifteen years, leading Roger Horrocks to suggest that the essay became "as much a social or cultural event as a literary one".[86] This may come as a surprise, because the essay was ostensibly literary; it did not refer to cultural aspects in any overt manner at all. What readers picked up on, however, was an implicit rejoinder to New Zealand's provincial writers, who in Stead's mind watched significant international trends in literature and theory go past without using them to advance and deepen New Zealand culture. This was a significant cultural statement to make, because it suggested to his audience that New Zealand was still (even in 1979) a provincial backwater. Using poetry as evidence for his argument, Stead suggested that both New Zealand literature and New Zealand culture had remained staid and derivative until the nineteen seventies.

Christian Karlson Stead was born in Auckland in 1932 and educated at Mount Albert Grammar School and later Auckland University College where he gained an M.A. before completing a year at Auckland Teachers College in 1954.[87] Stead was taught by Allen Curnow at Auckland University College, and credits him (along with James K. Baxter) as a significant influence on his writing.[88] Commenting on his

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[84]C. K. Stead, 'Preliminary: From Wystan to Carlos – Modern and Modernism in Recent New Zealand Poetry', in Stead, In the Glass Case, pp.139-159.
[85]Mike Doyle, 'The Poetics of C. K. Stead', Landfall 144 (December 1982), p.471.
[86]Roger Horrocks, 'Off the Map', Parallax 1:3 (Winter 1983), p.247.
[87]C. K. Stead, 'C. K. Stead', in New Zealand Who's Who Aotearoa (Auckland: NZ Who's Who Publications Ltd, 1998), pp.697-698.
[88]M. Harlow, 'Craft Interview With C. K. Stead', Landfall 148 (December 1983), p.448.

memories of growing up in New Zealand during the nineteen-fifties, Stead noted that ". . . New Zealand at large was, or seemed, incorrigibly Philistine".[89] It should be noted that Stead was of a younger generation than Fairburn, Curnow and the other Phoenix writers like Bob Lowry. Stead later suggested that this generational gap made a significant difference to his outlook, because he became aware that despite their pretensions of an objective involvement with broader society these writers tended to affect a Bohemianism that asserted a difference between themselves and society as a whole - a false "artiness"[90] that naturally developed amongst intellectuals living in a society uninterested in art and ideas. Despite pretensions of social involvement, the nature of New Zealand society led these writers to distance themselves despite their professed beliefs. In 1957 Stead left for England with his wife of two years to undertake a Ph.D. at the University of Bristol,[91] returning to New Zealand in 1960 after working in the Australian university system. On his return to New Zealand he took up a lectureship at Auckland University, where he was to remain until 1986. In 1967 he became Professor of English (at the young age of 35), at a time when New Zealand was undergoing quite radical changes in its social and intellectual development.

When Stead addressed the Writer's Conference in 1979 he was at the height of his influence as a literary critic, but was also a well established poet and fiction writer. His poetry included Whether the Will is Free (1962), Crossing the Bar (1972), Quesada, Poems: 1972-74 (1975) and Walking Westward (1979) and he had also published a successful novel called Smith's Dream (1971) and appeared in an anthology of short stories. He certainly understood what it meant to be a practising artist in New Zealand and to his credit rarely complained like other authors of literary critique. By 1979 his critical writing was as broad as his fictional and poetic work, based around the international reputation he gained from writing The New Poetic in 1964, which focused on modernist poetry from W. B. Yeats to T. S. Eliot and has remained in print for over thirty years. Stead's literary career in New Zealand has been less than smooth, however. In 1966 he caused a stir with an essay in Landfall

[89]C. K. Stead, 'Remembering the Fifties', Landfall 185 (April 1993), p.9.
[90]ibid.
[91]Greg O'Brien and Robert Cross, Moments of Invention: Portraits of 21 New Zealand Writers (Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1988), p.76.

that reappraised the career of A. R. D. Fairburn, suggesting that the older writer used "faded 'literary' language . . ."[92] that could no longer pass critical inspection. Ian Hamilton agreed with Stead that Fairburn's "spreading of the personality . . ."[93] could not be used to protect his literary reputation, but for many years the essay was much disputed and seen as an attempt to undermine the reputation of a well respected literary personality (it was the same dispute that Wystan Curnow referred to in "High Culture in a Small Province" seven years later). Nevertheless, after his return to New Zealand in 1960 Stead had built a solid reputation both at home and overseas as an "extremely accurate, lucid, lively . . ."[94] literary critic and cultural commentator. His collection of literary criticism In the Glass Case (1981) was well received (despite the inclusion of "From Wystan to Carlos") and was described by W. H. Oliver as "the liveliest, sharpest and most provocative book of New Zealand literary criticism that I have read".[95]

Despite his solid reputation as a critic, "From Wystan to Carlos" met with vehement personal and professional attacks over a period of fifteen years. Personal anecdote has it that Stead's 1979 address was a riveting experience and there was little direct confrontation with him at the time, but soon afterwards it became apparent that the lecture had antagonised many practising New Zealand poets who felt that Stead had misrepresented modernist poetry in general, and current poetic practice in New Zealand particularly. Indeed, from 1979 onwards Stead came to be viewed as the "arch-reactionary of New Zealand letters",[96] ironically for attempting to "change the terms"[97] under which New Zealand critics practised and integrated local critical practice with the global environment. Even as late as 1987 literary critics in both New Zealand and Australia were "preoccupied with C. K. Stead"[98] and his attempts to refocus the literary history of New Zealand on broader concerns. Following the

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[92]C. K. Stead, 'Fairburn', Landfall 80 (December 1966), p.371.
[93]Ian Hamilton, 'Fairburn and Dr. Stead', Comment 32 (September 1967), p.36.
[94]P. Alcock, 'Buster O'Stead Rides Out', Parallax 1 (Winter 1983), p.344.
[95]W. H. Oliver, 'Perceiving Reality', Comment 15 (April 1982), p.33.
[96]Mark Williams, 'C. K. Stead and the New Literary Order', Meanjin 53:4 (Summer 1994), p.698.
[97]C. K. Stead and Fleur Adcock, 'C.K. Stead and Fleur Adcock: A Conversation', Landfall 181 (March 1992), p.46.
[98]Williams, 'C.K. Stead and the New Literary Order', p.695.

publication of "From Wystan to Carlos", Stead came under more and more scrutiny for both his critical and personal opinions - the most highly publicised situations arising from comments he made in the Auckland magazine Metro during the nineteen-nineties. It is this blending of the personal and political that is so interesting in C. K. Stead, because he is an explicit example of the way in which questions of a literary nature can become enmeshed in cultural (and even racial) disputes. Nevertheless, he has a strength of character that prompted him to speak his mind and take the criticisms however they might fall and he remains a dominant figure in New Zealand letters.

According to Stead the cultural environment began to alter rapidly after he returned to New Zealand in 1960. "[E]verything changed. American troops were committed to Vietnam, and simultaneously the social and sexual revolution one thinks of as 'the Sixties' began to be felt in New Zealand".[99] During this period in New Zealand's history, environmental issues, feminism, Vietnam and anti-apartheid issues came to the fore. It is acceptable to view Stead as part of the liberal movement that took issue against the government and society at large on these points of conflict throughout the sixties and seventies.[100] His novel Smith's Dream (1971), for example, turned New Zealand into an autocratic state analogous to Vietnam, with a typically New Zealand "Man Alone" figure striving to restore democracy and the rule of law. Stead opposed American involvement in Vietnam, but supported a war of national liberation on the part of the South Vietnamese. His stance was typical of those during the period who opposed the terms under which the war was being fought, rather than harbouring Communist sympathies. The liberal aspect to his personality can also be seen through his involvement in the 1981 Springbok tour, when he was jailed for participating in anti-tour protests. The attribution of Stead to a broader left-liberal alliance is not tenable, however, due to his views on significant aspects of late twentieth century New Zealand society.[101] Stead himself has admitted that he has been characterised as a "nasty sexist person . . ."[102] and ongoing debates with Keri

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[99]Stead, 'Remembering the Fifties', p.10.
[100]Williams, 'C.K. Stead and the New Literary Order', p.698.
[101]ibid.
[102]Stead and Adcock, 'C.K. Stead and Fleur Adcock: A Conversation', p.56.

Hulme and Albert Wendt have called into question his racial views.[103] Mark Williams has provided a thesis for Stead's turbulent public persona that can hardly be bettered, finely outlining the relationship of Stead and his (male) contemporaries to the changing scene in New Zealand after the sixties:

> . . . Stead's left-liberal activism of the sixties and seventies did not anticipate, and could not accommodate, the radical and fundamentalist politics of the late eighties, which aimed at nothing less than the remaking of New Zealand as Aotearoa, a country no longer tied nostalgically or culturally to Europe but part of the Pacific, and to which the liberal conscience of the white academic male was merely the smokescreen of the oppressor.[104]

"From Wystan to Carlos" occupies an integral position both in Stead's own career as a literary critic and public personality, and in terms of the redefinition of identity that was occurring across New Zealand society generally. The essay was written with a tone of scholarly authority that was anathema to certain sectors of society who were in the process of reacting against just this kind of white patriachal hegemony. Although the essay was an attempt to break the dominance of earlier cultural nationalists and force New Zealand poets to view their work from a liberal and global perspective, it came to be seen as severely prescriptive and inattentive to the changing pattern of New Zealand culture. "From Wystan to Carlos" suffered as much from the cultural and political scene surrounding it as from any substantively damaging critical arguments.

Stead has defended "From Wystan to Carlos" by suggesting that he was only trying to write "a piece of literary history"[105] outlining recent trends in New Zealand poetry at the same time as offering a different set of terms and seeing "what the picture looks like if we do that".[106] Criticism of the essay has centred around the terms that Stead proposed for the study of New Zealand literature, namely "Modern" and

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[103]Williams, 'C.K. Stead and the New Literary Order', pp.698-699.
[104]ibid, p.698.
[105]Stead and Adcock, 'C.K. Stead and Fleur Adcock: A Conversation', p.46.
[106]ibid, p.47.

"Modernism". The difficulty is that "[a]lthough the concept "modernism" may seem intolerably vague, it has come to serve a crucial function in criticism and literary history, as well as in theoretical debates about literature".[107] Despite being used widely in literary criticism across the world, there is no clear consensus about its meaning amongst scholars. Its "crucial function" is constantly undermined by a lack of definition. Indeed, the inherent "semantic instability"[108] of the concept (as well as the related concept post-modernism) makes any use of it appear narrow and prescriptive because it becomes immediately obvious that the writer has chosen a definition that best suits his purposes. Indeed, "[u]sing the term is an immediate act of classification";[109] an act of classification that makes explicit the author's views on what constitutes both modern existence generally and the modernist canon in particular. It is for this reason that the history of the term is replete with instances of "aesthetic, cultural, and ideological conflict".[110]

There is ample reason to believe that Stead understood the slipperiness of the term intimately and was simply trying to introduce the concept to New Zealand letters as a prompt to further definition, but such was the small size of the literary community in New Zealand that it prompted a cliquish and heated debate.[111] The fourth paragraph in "From Wystan to Carlos" provided internal evidence as to Stead's awareness of the potential inherent in the concept of modernism, as he noted that "[i]n my previous book on that subject, I was interested in an historical umbrella - I called it 'the new poetic' - which would cover Yeats, Eliot, and Pound. Now I'm more interested in what separates Yeats on the one hand from Pound and early Eliot on the other".[112] In other words, whereas The New Poetic (1964) used the "umbrella" of modernism to unify Yeats, Pound and Eliot, The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot (1987) would use the term to illustrate their differences. Smart notes that the concept is such that the usage

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[107]Astradur Eysteinsson, The Concept of Modernism (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.1.
[108]Ihab Hassan, The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), p.87.
[109]Eysteinsson, The Concept of Modernism, p.51.
[110]ibid.
[111]Stead and Adcock, 'C.K. Stead and Fleur Adcock: A Conversation', pp.46-47.
[112]Stead, 'From Wystan to Carlos', p.140.

of modern, modernism and modernity differs from commentator to commentator.[113] Stead's example shows that use of the term can even alter over the course of a single writer's career, and given the nature of the concept there is nothing inherently wrong with this. It is a rather colourful aspect of the term that its meaning tends to "slip and slide in time . . .".[114] Nevertheless, it is clearly not a term conducive to clarity of argument and Stead's use of it explains a lot of the negative criticism received by "From Wystan to Carlos". Perhaps the most annoying aspect to Stead's contemporaries was that there was no-one of sufficient authority to put forward an adequate rejoinder to his propositions. What criticism there was tended to be splintered and incapable of destabilising the fundamental authority behind Stead's address.

Literary critics have traditionally interpreted "From Wystan to Carlos" in terms of Stead's interpretation of international trends in poetry during the twentieth century, indeed criticism of the essay has rested almost solely on the results of this interpretation. Stead contended that the modernist tradition in poetry after Eliot's The Wasteland and Pound's Cantos had no English inheritors, and that despite popular belief the verse of Auden, Spender, Day Lewis and MacNeice was determinably Georgian in origin rather than Modernist. Although developed in England, Stead argued that the modernist tradition was only extended in America, through the poetry of William Carlos Williams and Charles Olson in particular. Because New Zealand poets had relied upon English examples until the late sixties, it followed that New Zealand poetry had been closed off from important influences and been forced to extend the Georgian mode to exhaustion.[115] New Zealand's provincial outlook and dependence on England for poetic form had effectively divorced it from the modernist tradition until the advent of Freed (1969-72) magazine.[116] This aspect of Stead's argument represented a significant cultural statement that pointed out in tangible terms the end result of New Zealand's provincial outlook; a blinkering of vision that allowed sophisticated modes of expression to pass by unnoticed. Although Stead's

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[113]Barry Smart, Modern Conditions, Postmodern Controversies (London: Routledge, 1992), p.143.
[114]Hassan, The Postmodern Turn, p.88.
[115]Stead, 'From Wystan to Carlos', pp.141-142.
[116]ibid, p.147.

address was inherently literary in orientation, it contained an implicit (and resolute) critique of New Zealand's cultural pattern.

Analysis along these lines does explain the content of the essay adequately, but it does little to disclose the underlying logic of Stead's argument. In order to understand his essay properly it is necessary to understand the difference between competing conceptions of what modernism actually is: one is a literary conception, the other historical, and Stead mixed the two together. "From Wystan to Carlos" was predicated upon an understanding of the terms "Modern" and "Modernism" that underpinned Stead's entire analysis. This led him to not only distinguish between Georgians and Modernists but to continue his discussion through a characterisation of these modes as "Closed" and "Open". Terminological slipperiness enters at this point, and it is necessary to ascertain just what Stead meant when he spoke of "Modern" and "Modernism". To most historians, modernism is simply the diachronic relation to modernity: one half of an abstracted semiological system.[117] At this most reductive mode of historical understanding *any* twentieth century thought can be conceived as "Modernism". All that is required are the accoutrements of a modern nation and modernist thought will arise. To Stead "Modern" was simply a synonym for "contemporary", however, whereas "Modernism" referred to a set of poetic principles held in common by Pound and Eliot and developed in America through the poets included in Donald M. Allen's anthology The New American Poets (1960). Although suggesting that his analysis was historical, his understanding of modernism was in fact purely literary, in that his category "Modernism" was not made up of historical instances and trends, but of literary techniques and attitudes. Ian Wedde criticised Stead on exactly these terms when he asserted the "historicity"[118] of modernism against Stead's acceptance of a purely literary categorisation. All Stead wanted to do was to make "a distinction between poetry which is simply 'modern' in its time, and the poetry of the Modernist movement".[119] In an environment in which post-modernism was beginning to be articulated and the entire relationship between modernity and its diachronic relations were being worked through, Stead's reliance on

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[117]Hassan, The Postmodern Turn, p.88.
[118]Ian Wedde, 'Poetry and Progress', Listener 114 (October 18 1986), p.66.
[119]Stead, 'From Wystan to Carlos', p.143.

a mid-century (and purely literary) definition of "Modernism" seemed inadequate.

Despite the fact that Stead's terms were rather outdated to some members of his audience, it must be noted that they served his purpose well by adding to the oppositional power of his rhetoric.[120] Stead's main point in "From Wystan to Carlos" was that New Zealand poets had reacted to their contemporary world in a manner that was more closely related to the Georgian poets and their descendants like Auden, who emphasised "the realism, the truth-telling, the sense of public responsibility".[121] The "Modern" New Zealand poets referred to in Stead's title were therefore actually "contemporary Georgians". Stead buttressed his argument through reference to Allen Curnow's critical philosophy, and cogently argued his point, but it is wise to note that there was polemic disguised in his prose that aimed to not only historicise Curnow's views but undermine them. Stead's analysis developed a heavy strain of irony by noting that New Zealand poets as varied as Fairburn, Curnow and Glover reacted against what they perceived as Georgian sentimentalism in the Kowhai Gold tradition while at the same time producing poetry that appeared to Stead to be heavily laden with Georgian realism. The argument is the same as that proffered by Wystan Curnow in "High Culture in a Small Province" - the forefathers of modern New Zealand poetry reacted violently against a mode of poetry they never managed to fully avoid themselves:

> Instead of God's own country, a land of milk and honey, South Seas Paradise, the land of kowhai gold and Christmas under the pohutukawas, we're presented with a land of mean cities and mortgaged farms, 'a land of settlers / With never a soul at home'.[122]

The problem for Stead was related to "the fundamental techniques and purposes of poetry".[123] The adherence to the Georgian style gave New Zealand poets no choice

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[120]It explains how he could be opposed by Conservatives like Fleur Adcock and Radicals like Alan Loney at the same time. He had chosen terms that neither could wholly accept.
[121]Stead, 'From Wystan to Carlos', p.141.
[122]ibid, p.145.
[123]ibid, p.146.

but to simply alter the content of their poems, without an attendant alteration in the form. Even when the poets who gathered around Louis Johnson in Wellington during the fifties tried to break away from cultural nationalists like Curnow, they simply altered the content of their work, moving towards urban scenes and populating their poems with people instead of uninhabited landscapes. Although the poets of the thirties and forties had been of their time and explored the extent of the mode fully, "[w]hen [the] momentum of the thirties and forties died away, what was left?".[124] Modern New Zealand poetry until Freed magazine during the late sixties had been severely restricted by following England's example and simply reapplying the basic Georgian model to changing times. Although openly conceding his "preference for Modernist poetics . . ."[125] and admitting that there was no inherent difference in quality between the "Moderns" (or Georgians) and "Modernists", the central implications of "From Wystan to Carlos" were rather derisive of the New Zealand "moderns". Stead's use of the term "Modern" to denote an ongoing Georgian strain in New Zealand poetry was seen as faint praise indeed.

Ian Wedde has articulately suggested that "Stead's endeavour is mortgaged to his need to vindicate his own position as a Modernist poet".[126] Rather than being a benign literary history, "From Wystan to Carlos" was actually an attempt (conscious or otherwise) by Stead to redirect the literary genealogy of New Zealand towards his own practices, and it was this action that antagonised his contemporaries. By defining modernism in New Zealand poetry through his own literary preferences and practices, Stead was able to privilege his own mode of poetry as having major significance. Not only did he use his distinction between "Moderns" and "Modernists" to destabilise previous notions of literary inheritance, but he inserted himself at the centre of a trend away from the "closed forms"[127] of the Georgian tradition towards the "open form[s]"[128] he felt was characteristic of "Modernist" poetry. These two terms are crucial at this point, because it was through them that Stead supported his argument that New Zealand poetry had been dominated by "Moderns" until the sixties. In terms

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[124]ibid.
[125]ibid, p.144.
[126]Wedde, 'Poetry and Progress', p.67.
[127]Stead, 'From Wystan to Carlos', p.142.
[128]ibid.

of his argument it was essential for him to "prove" that the fundamental form of New Zealand poetry had not changed until the sixties. By defining "closed form" in terms of "formal measures, stanzas, and rhyme . . ."[129] and "organized abstraction",[130] and linking this through historical argument to the Georgian tradition, Stead was able to explicate the poetry of key New Zealand poets (notably Allen Curnow and James K. Baxter) in terms of their Georgianism. After using the terms "Modern" and "Georgian" to point to the content of New Zealand poetry until the sixties, he used the term "closed" to refer to their form - QED. After dispensing with his "historical" argument that New Zealand poetry had been dominated by Georgian content and closed forms, Stead then went on to suggest that during the sixties a group of young New Zealand poets began to move towards the (American) Modernist tradition, employing open forms that represented "an openness to experience *as it occurs* . . ."[131] and redirecting New Zealand poetry away from the stifling provincial adherence to England in an effort to make greater use of developing international ideas.

The key element to this phase of Stead's argument was Freed (1969-72) magazine, which until "From Wystan to Carlos" had gone largely unnoticed. Freed ran through five issues over three years and published poets like Ian Wedde, Alan Brunton, David Mitchell, Jan Kemp and Murray Edmond. Brunton edited the first two issues, Edmond the second two and Haley the last. The magazine was an avant-garde attack on New Zealand's literary mainstream, aiming to position itself outside any possible classification and confuse New Zealand's established poets and critics with inane statements reminiscent of Monty Python and Dadaist collages that indicated iconoclasm and an acceptance of machine-culture. New Zealand poetry was mixed with references to the Italian renaissance explorer Vespucci and articles on the avant-garde, Impressionism, Dada and diagrams of robot art. Alan Brunton included copies of Wyndham Lewis' Blast covers. The overall effect was to make classification difficult (if not impossible) and to step outside the strictures of the New Zealand poetic tradition. Stead suggested that Freed was a movement which had "fundamental

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[129]ibid, p.148.
[130]ibid.
[131]ibid.

theoretical implications"[132] and a statement that "the new poets of the decade were taking a differing path from their predecessors . . .".[133] Interestingly, the Freed poets were dismayed that Stead had used them as evidence in his argument, and went on the attack in order to deny that they could be termed "Modernists" at all. Their whole purpose had been to deny the validity of literary classification in the first place, rather than move forward towards "open forms" and theory. They were just as interested in rock music, film, drugs and painting as poetry.

Stead added a significant footnote to "From Wystan to Carlos" when it was published in 1981:

> The various discriminations possible within the Modernist (or as one may choose to call it post-Modernist) tradition, are very important, but there is no room for them in a discussion such as this which aspires to represent recent literary history only in very broad terms.[134]

This was clearly an attempt to deflect criticism that his argument was formalist and prescriptive, but it did little to assuage those that had been angered by his address. Alan Loney attacked Stead in a review of Stead's poem Walking Westward in 1980, objecting to his use of the term "open form" to describe the practices of the Freed poets. Radical opponents of Stead felt that he had set up of his notion of "Modernism" in order to place himself at its centre, and his characterisation of the mode as "open" was based on a simplistic understanding of poets like Charles Olson and Robert Creeley who had developed it. Loney argued that open form could not be opposed to closed form, because open form poetry was based precisely on the belief that poems should develop through the act of composition itself, rather than within or against formalist, theoretical understandings of the art. Loney suggested that Stead would always fail as long as he searched for (open) form through formal (prescriptive) language.[135] Loney preferred the term "Field Composition" to "Open Form" and

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[132]ibid, p.147.
[133]ibid.
[134]ibid.
[135]Alan Loney, 'Some Aspects of C.K. Stead's 'Walking Westward'', Islands 30 (October 1980), p.250.

quoted Charles Olson to force his point that "[f]rom the moment [a poet] ventures into FIELD COMPOSITION - he puts himself in the open - he can go by no track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself".[136] Loney, and others like Ian Wedde and Roger Horrocks felt that Stead had disingenuously inserted typically post-modern elements of poetry into his definition of modernism in order to strengthen his position at the centre. Although using a literary definition of modernism to set up his argument, he then shifted towards a historical definition in order to insert elements of recent New Zealand poetry he considered to be "open". At this point the circumlocutions of his argument become severe, and it becomes difficult to separate his central thesis from the element of rhetoric that was attempting to gain independence from Allen Curnow's philosophy.[137] Stead was trying to do two things at once: re-write the literary history of New Zealand and position himself at the centre of post-sixties, post-Curnow developments. The criticism is telling, especially in Stead's refusal of surreal elements in his definition of modernism. Although Freed often appeared particularly surreal (it was a technique that further enabled them to confound attempts at definition), Stead commented that "[t]he surrealist, I think, tends to deplete the language by diminishing its reference to a verifiable world, and thus tends to turn poetry into verbal play".[138] In short, Stead's articulation of modernism was unclear. On the one hand he associated it with particular literary practices associated with Pound and Eliot, and on the other he asserted the historicity of the concept in order to insert post-modern techniques into his definition. He took central terms of post-modernism such as "field" and "open form" and applied them to his definition of modernism in order to give his own poetic practices contemporary relevance. Logic would dictate that he could have either developed a definition of modernism based on literary categories (which would necessarily preclude the use of post-modern categories) or assert the radical historicity of modernism and include *any* poetic elements he found to be present in recent New Zealand poetry - he did both and satisfied nobody. Although it is correct to suggest that "From Wystan to Carlos" was

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[136]Charles Olson, 'Projective Verse', in James Scully, ed., Modern Poets on Modern Poetry (London: Fontana, 1966), p.272, cited in Alan Loney, 'Some Aspects of C. K. Stead's 'Walking Westward'', p.248.
[137]Horrocks, 'Off the Map', p.249.
[138]Stead, 'From Wystan to Carlos', p.153.

an "authoritative"[139] account of New Zealand literature and culture, there have been few willing to take up Stead's analysis and move forward with it.

Little more needs to be said on the content of "From Wystan to Carlos". Stead was well aware of the difficulties inherent in the concept of modernism, and attempted to use the semantic instability of the term to position himself at the centre of post-sixties developments in New Zealand poetry. It is impossible to ascertain just how conscious he was of what he had done, but it was typical of literary critics during the late seventies and early eighties to blur the lines between modernism and post-modernism because there had not been enough time to fully examine the implications of such a radical discursive shift. Was post-modernism a continuation of modernism or a radical divorce from it? Stead's argument became unclear on this very point, and his younger critics (who were themselves involved in articulating the new paradigm) came to see him as a confused reactionary desperately attempting to retain for himself elements of the new technology while at the same time watering down its most potent aspects. In his defence, however, Stead wrote "From Wystan to Carlos" at a very difficult time in terms of literary theory and history. Few theorists had fully come to grips with the advent of post-modernism and his compromise was understandable in this context. His identification of the Georgian strain in New Zealand poetry was also basically useful. Moreover, as Roger Horrocks pointed out, "[v]irtually every other writer on New Zealand poetry has mentioned Stead's essay somewhere".[140] "From Wystan to Carlos" contained an element of high rhetoric and literary authority that demanded to be heard, and there has been no other essay in the history of literary critique that has received so much attention. Wystan Curnow's comment in his preface to Essays on New Zealand Literature is useful in this context, because New Zealand artists and critics were increasingly turning to a mode of writing that "favours interpretation and exposition over opinion and instant evaluation . . .".[141] There was little support for a critic engaged in developing a new myth of New Zealand literary history.

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[139]Williams, 'Literary Scholarship', p.719.
[140]Horrocks, 'Off the Map', p.247.
[141]Wystan Curnow, 'Preface' to Essays, p.vii.

Stead's essay was essentially a critique of New Zealand's received literary tradition. It had the same kind of literary authority wielded by E. H. McCormick in 1940; a literary critic totally at one with his topic and bold enough to put forward a new version of literary history. In this sense "From Wystan to Carlos" was primarily didactic, and oriented towards New Zealand's broader literary community. It was his implicit critique of New Zealand culture that offended many of his critics, however. He not only put forward a new literary history, but implied that New Zealand's poets were indicative of a general cultural malaise that allowed the main currents of global literary theory to pass by unnoticed. The implications of his literary critique did not endear him to the country's practising poets. New Zealanders were opening up and did not want to be told how to go about it by a white academic male born before World War Two. It took a strong individual to stand and deliver in this environment.

iii] Keri Hulme, Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand, 1981.

It is fitting that the next essay to be examined in this chapter stands diametrically opposed to Stead's offering in "From Wystan to Carlos". Keri Hulme wrote "Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand"[142] in 1981, two years before she had established herself as New Zealand's most well known writer with The Bone People (1983).[143] Hulme stands in opposition to Stead in many ways. Not only is she female, but she also identifies as a Maori and has had little contact with the university system. In terms of literary critique as a tradition these factors are significant. Hulme was the only female writer to engage in the mode before 1983, and the only Maori as well. Traditionally, literary critique has been a mode of writing dominated by middle-class white males who constructed an image of New Zealand that attempted to be inclusive but generally failed simply by virtue of an inability to see beyond the boundaries of class, gender and racial identity. Hulme's essay signalled the beginnings of post-colonial discourse in New Zealand, wherein the hegemony of the

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[142]Keri Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', in Guy Armithanayagam and S. C. Harrex, eds, Only Connect: Literary Perspectives East and West (Adelaide: Centre for Research in the New Literatures in English, 1981), pp. 290-310.

[143]Keri Hulme, The Bone People (Wellington: Spiral, 1983).

white male began to be eroded and the legacy of the colonisation process was at times viciously attacked. The acrimony associated with this period in New Zealand's intellectual history should not be underestimated. In many ways the nineteen-eighties represent an attempt to pull down the apparatus developed during the post-war years and define a new identity for New Zealand based on racial inclusiveness and gender equality. Keri Hulme stood as a symbol of these processes, consciously blurring the lines between concepts of race and gender and asserting the necessity for spiritual values and a close association with the land. "Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand" is the most individualistic essay to be examined in this thesis. Hulme wrote from the perspective of a dedicated artist and had little time for academic in-fighting. Moreover, her extremely didactic tone and exaltation of tradition over genius spoke to two central concerns of literary critique as a mode.

Keri Hulme, "novelist, short story writer and poet . . .",[144] was born in 1947 and raised near Christchurch to a mother of Scots descent and a father with genealogical ties to Lancashire. Her Maori heritage is Kati Tahu "the prominent and paramount South Island tribe"[145] which in terms of mathematics amounts to one-eighth of her "mongrel"[146] identity. Hulme's younger years had a major impact on her later life. The oldest of nine children (of which six survived) she has described herself as an odd child afflicted with nervous eczema, poor sight and a "fairly large"[147] figure that made her the centre of school yard taunts. Her father died when she was eleven,[148] and it seems that at this time she began to write poetry, while attending North New Brighton Primary School and spending family holidays at Moeraki on the east coast of the South Island.[149] In many ways Hulme's upbringing was typical of New Zealand, spent with a large extended family that included people of diverse heritage who lived close to the land of necessity as well as choice. Although writing poetry since the age of

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[144]Kim Worthington, 'Keri Hulme', in Robinson and Wattie, eds, The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature, p.247.
[145]Andrew Peek, 'An Interview With Keri Hulme', New Literatures Review 20 (Winter 1990), p.2.
[146]Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', p.294.
[147]Sandi Hall, 'Conversation at Okarito', Broadsheet 121 (July/August 1984), p.19.
[148]Sue Kedgley, Our Own Country: Leading New Zealand Women Writers Talk About Their Writing and Their Lives (Auckland: Penguin, 1989), p.90.
[149]Worthington, 'Keri Hulme', p.247.

twelve, Hulme was unaware that New Zealand even had a developed literary tradition and critical apparatus until she was twenty-five.[150] Initially writing was simply a natural mode of creative expression and Hulme held no desire to become a writer. After completing her education at Aranui High School in Christchurch, Hulme moved to the West Coast and began a varied career consisting of odd jobs ranging from fish and chip cook, wool winder, pharmacist assistant, painter, white-baiter and postie.[151] A brief conversion to Catholicism at age eighteen ended when her "logic ran full-tilt into the idea of Hell . . .",[152] but it did open her eyes to New Zealand literature through James K. Baxter whom she heard of from her brother who had returned from Australia (after falling foul of the law and ending up at the Jerusalem commune). Although Hulme read Jerusalem Sonnets at this time she has denied any influence from Baxter at all.[153] It simply opened her eyes to the fact that there was actually a local literary tradition. A brief stint at Canterbury University studying law did nothing to broaden this perspective.[154] Her upbringing was such that she had little contact with the Pakeha literary world, noting that until she read Baxter she "didn't know it existed . . ."[155] and did not like it much when she encountered it later. It was while tobacco picking in Motueka (near Nelson) at age twenty-five that she decided to pursue a literary career, and began to send work to Rowley Habib who became a major influence on her writing by way of an "absolutely magnificent correspondence . . .".[156]

Hulme's writing career is interesting in terms of her foray into literary critique, specifically because "Mauri" was written before her reputation had been fully established. Most of the other examples of literary critique included in this thesis were written by reasonably well established authors who were able to write with a certain authority. Indeed many of the authors appeared to adopt an almost paternalistic tone

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[150]Harry Ricketts, Talking About Ourselves: Twelve New Zealand Poets in Conversation With Harry Ricketts (Wellington: Mallinson Rendel, 1986), p.20.
[151]Peek, 'An Interview With Keri Hulme', p.1.
[152]Ricketts, Talking About Ourselves, p.26.
[153]ibid.
[154]ibid, p.20.
[155]ibid, pp.28-29.
[156]Don Long, 'A Conversation With Keri Hulme', Tu Tangata 7 (August/September 1982), p.4.

towards the literary community. Until the middle of the nineteen-eighties, Keri Hulme survived on Literary Fund grants (in 1973, 1977 and 1979).[157] In 1975 she won the Katherine Mansfield memorial Award for her short story "Hooks and Feelers" and in 1977 won the Maori Trust Fund Prize for writing in English[158] and was awarded a mini-Burns Fellowship at Otago University.[159] "Mauri" was written in association with the East West Centre in Hawaii, where she worked as a visiting New Zealand poet in 1979.[160] Her first collection of poetry was published in 1982[161] and the following year The Bone People gained her national and international recognition (culminating in the 1984 New Zealand Book Award Prize and the 1985 Booker-McConnell Prize).[162] "Mauri" therefore occupies an interesting position in the history of New Zealand literary critique. Not only was it written by an aspiring author struggling along on literary grants and odd jobs, but the impetus for its publication came from a source outside New Zealand. In this sense the essay can be seen to symbolise the developing international interest in post-colonial nations and the rise of comparative studies between these nations. One author has described this development in terms of a burgeoning interest in "cross-cultural poetics".[163]

"Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand" adopted an extremely didactic tone from the outset, largely because it was written for an international audience, but also because New Zealand bicultural poetry was an extremely new concept at the time. The Maori word "Mauri" was used as background content to explicate both Hulme's understanding of bicultural poetry and New Zealand history - an attempt to infuse her narrative with "the presence of the numinous".[164] Hulme defined "Mauri" as:

1] Life principle, thymos of Man.

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[157]ibid.
[158]Worthington, 'Keri Hulme', p.247.
[159]Long, 'A Conversation With Keri Hulme', p.4.
[160]ibid.
[161]Keri Hulme, The Silences Between (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1982).
[162]Kedgley, Our Own Country, p.88.
[163]Graham Huggan, 'Opting Out of the (Critical) Common Market: Creolization and the Post-Colonial Text', Kunapipi 11:1 (1989), p.29.
[164]Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', p.290.

2] Source of the emotions.

3] Talisman, a material symbol of the hidden principle protecting vitality, *mana*, fruitfulness.[165]

The definition was taken from a standard dictionary of Maori, and Hulme noted that "[i]n the old days . . ."[166] Mauri could be a stick or a stone or even trees and rocks - anything that had accumulated a certain creative potency over time. The concept is extremely interesting in terms of a local creative aesthetic, because it refers to an inbuilt (and conditional) creative potency that can reside in almost any physical object. Rather than positing poets as world redeemers, Hulme implied that their role in New Zealand might be to reorient thought back towards the life-giving principles inherent in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Hulme's initial narrative in "Mauri" was essentially historical rather than spiritual, however, in an attempt to indicate the way in which bicultural poetry itself is ultimately defined by its historicity. Over time Maori *waiata* ("a term covering both songs and poems generally"[167]) evolved depending not only upon events specific to the Maori people such as battles and trade, but as records of the Maori reaction to European invasion. Hulme viewed bicultural poems in New Zealand in and of themselves, at once reflecting and constituting our experience of history. Viewed as material traces of history in this manner, Maori (and later bicultural) poetry gained a certain noumenal quality that helped to transmit and safeguard the Maori aesthetic. Hulme's "post-colonial" concerns should be obvious at this juncture. She used bicultural poetry as source material to explicate the way in which the Maori aesthetic was altered through contact with European culture (and Christianity in particular) at the same time as she made explicit the fact that the essential life principle, or thymos, of the poems was unchanged. Various modes of *waiata* ranging from love songs to lamentations, curses, lullabies and pure entertainment were explored from the *oriori* (lullaby) of Nohomaiterangi in 1600 A.D. to modern poems by Hulme and others four hundred years later. Although the form and content of Maori poetry changed over

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[165]ibid (Hulme's emphasis).
[166]ibid.
[167]ibid.

time, it became apparent through Hulme's use of the term "Mauri" that the essential principle of the mode had remained unchanged. Bicultural poetry became a means by which deep cultural interaction could take place across both cultures *and* time. "Mauri" stands as the most historical example of literary critique in New Zealand after Letters and Art in New Zealand and represented a timely corrective to McCormick's Eurocentric analysis. Hulme's point was well made in her juxtaposition of Nohomaiterangi's *oriori* of c.1600 with another composed between 1822 and 1827 after missionary contact (the missionary in question happens to be Turner, a well known Weslyan who worked in the north Auckland area):[168]

> Son who came forth on a winter's morning,
> Ascend, mount up, my son,
> To your multitude in the sky!
> Will you survive, my son,
> These evil times?
> My child, go quickly
> That you may reach the sacred waters of your ancestors,
> That they may unfasten the black dogskin cloak of war
> For you to wear when the expeditions set forth!
> I have bound to my weapon
> The albatross plume of the land,
> I have caught from the foaming waves
> The albatross plume of the sea
> As it was going down in stormy waters![169]

and,

> Crying, Joseph?
> No need to cry,
> Think of the night,
> The night of the preaching,

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[168]ibid, pp.291-292.
[169]ibid, p.291.

The night of the prayers;
You will be washed
In the water of Jordan,
Wash away evil,
Wash away sin.
Then my son,
You will go to Turner's house,
You will learn to read
The letters of the book,
The first book,
The Book of Genesis,
The good word of Matthew,
You will understand,
It will strike through the eyes
Into the body -
There, my son.[170]

Hulme finished her historical analysis through reference to the impact of the European invasion on the Maori population, noting that in addition to a new religion the Europeans also bought new diseases, new weapons and alcohol, which led in turn to a decline in the Maori population that was exacerbated by a land-grab that impinged on Maori culture "with all the delicacy and finesse of a *tsunami* . . .".[171] In an interview in Broadsheet in 1984 Hulme emphasised her understanding of Maori culture and the impact of Europeans upon it. It indicates that she was well versed in pre-European New Zealand history, to the point of being off-hand about quite complex shifts in the Maori cultural pattern:

> before the European, contact between Maori and Maori was a largely commercial one, and the balance seems to have swung from being contacts through that and contact between runaway wives and husbands, which was a very common one, from the

[170]ibid, p.292.
[171]ibid (Hulme's emphasis).

> trading of obsidian and greenstone to an ever more damaging set of reprisals and raid, which generated more reprisals, and so on and so forth. The contact had swung to being a warlike one . . . . But there is no doubt whatever that once the Brits got here, things went down with a helluva whop.[172]

Two sections following on from "*The Maori Past*" attempted to place Hulme's historical narrative within her contemporary context. "*The Maori Present*" and "*Maori Reality, Pakeha Myth*" noted that New Zealand's population of 3.2 million people was (in 1981) made up of one tenth Maori, most of whom were urban and divided into small family groups that resulted in them being "cut off from the life of the land, the sea, your family *marae*, from your ancestral roots".[173] High levels of alcohol abuse did little to offset this distance from traditional modes of living and Hulme suggested that this highly visible minority had little choice but to "deal with the fact that [they were] Maori New Zealander[s]".[174] The issue was exacerbated in Hulme's mind by Pakeha stereotypes of the easy-going Maori who was keen on rugby, racing and beer and a myth of racial harmony that disguised harsh facts such as low life expectancy, high rates of unemployment, a high infant death rate and the fact that "a stunning 30 per cent of the New Zealand prison population is Maori".[175] It was at this point that Hulme introduced the bicultural theme into her essay, dissolving the boundaries she had erected between Maori and Pakeha with her "mongrel"[176] identity.

"*Being on Both Sides of the Fence*" suggested that although intermarriage between Maori and Pakeha has been going on since the two races first met , "[a] dual heritage is both pain and advantage".[177] While people such as Hulme with a dual heritage were familiar with the Maori world, they were never wholly of it; just as they were never wholly of the Pakeha world. Although over 40,000 New Zealanders used Maori as a

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[172]Hall, 'Conversation at Okarito', p.18.
[173]Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', p.293.
[174]ibid.
[175]ibid, p.294.
[176]ibid.
[177]ibid.

first language, English remained "far and away the dominant language".[178] In 1981 there was only one thirty minute television programme with a Maori focus, no Maori newspaper and only one five minute news segment devoted to Maori issues and the Maori language. Hulme pointed out that the Maori language was confined almost solely to the marae and despite the presence of two periodicals that published in Maori (Koru and Te Kaea) a situation had come about wherein ignorance and a lack of resources had brought about "this current school of Maori writers in English".[179] Herein lies the central thrust of "Mauri", however. In exploring the literature of "cross cultural contact"[180] Hulme hoped to present New Zealanders with a sector of the population that could facilitate cross cultural dialogue.

Hulme's "mongrel"[181] identity and refusal to conform to dominant stereotypes requires further examination at this point. She has said herself that she "hate[s] rigid demarcations. I don't believe in forms that are set, jelled, and shall be for evermore. I don't like boundaries you can't cross, and language of all things - this lovely, fluid system of communication - should always be spreading out".[182] The transgressing of boundaries has been a major theme of Keri Hulme's career, and she is symbolic of an individual who refuses to be neatly defined, in either racial or gender terms.[183] Her refusal to define herself as either Maori or Pakeha actually led to a fierce national debate during the late nineteen-eighties and early nineties centred around her right to characterise herself as a mongrel, yet still think of herself as a Maori rather than a Pakeha. Chris Prentice neatly encapsulated the central issue, which cut to the core of a much wider cultural debate:

> the implication is that either she is Maori, or she is Pakeha "cashing in" on the currently perceived advantages of Maori identification. This is the specific charge brought by C. K. Stead, who believes that "*The Bone People* . . . is a novel by a Pakeha

[178]ibid, p.295.
[179]ibid, p.296.
[180]ibid, p.295.
[181]ibid, p.294.
[182]Diana Wichtel, 'Taking Off', Listener (November 16 1985), p. 21.
[183]Shona Martyn, 'Brewer of Myths', Vogue Australia (April 1987), pp.164ff.

which has won an award intended for a Maori".[184]

Although Hulme asserted that "[t]he only way to drive a wedge through my taha Maori would be to drive a wedge through my skull",[185] her (parallel) acknowledgement of Pakeha ancestry opened her up to claims of hypocrisy.

The critical debate lacked one fundamental corrective, related to Hulme's inherent consistency. Criticism of a similar nature was levelled at her from feminists, who felt that the central protagonist in The Bone People was a feminist icon and that Hulme herself must therefore have held to the feminist cause. Hulme herself claimed to be gender neutral, however, noting that she was "a feminist because I was born female but I've never belonged to a feminist group in my life".[186] In another interview she stated that "there is no way that my actions are those of somebody who has a commitment to a feminist cause".[187] In addition to dissolving the boundary between Maori and Pakeha, Hulme dissolved the boundaries between male and female, noting that although your sex is female "your gender, the way you perceive of yourself and a lot of your actions . . ."[188] can be neuter. This aspect of her personality was influenced by Ann Oakley's book Sex, Gender and Society[189] and (like her assertion of bi-culturalism) has been a consistent feature of her thought. It is significant, however, that Keri Hulme is the only woman to be discussed in this thesis. Although writers like Cherry Hankin[190], Phoebe Meikle[191] and later Miriama Evans[192] (amongst others) engaged in New Zealand literary-critical debate over the years, Hulme was the first to

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[184]Chris Prentice, 'Grounding Postcolonial Fictions: Cultural Constituencies, Cultural Credentials and Uncanny Questions of Authority, Span 36:1 (October 1993), p.107.
[185]Wichtel, 'Taking Off', p.21.
[186]Kedgley, Our Own Country, p.98.
[187]Shona Smith, 'Constructing the Author: An Interview With Keri Hulme', Untold 4 (Spring 1985), p.31.
[188]ibid, p.30.
[189]Ann Oakley, Sex, Gender and Society (London: Temple Smith, 1972).
[190]Cherry Hankin, 'Realism, Nationalism and the Double Scale of Values in the Criticism of New Zealand Fiction', Landfall 128 (1978), pp.293-303.
[191]Phoebe Meikle, 'Inside and Outside Views: Women Short Story Writers', Landfall 130 (1979), pp.110-117.
[192]Miriama Evans, 'Politics and Maori Literature', Landfall 153 (March 1985), pp.40-45.

produce an example of literary critique that made any real impact on the national literary scene. It was not until 1995 that a woman with any overtly feminist politics engaged in the form with any real force.[193] Like Maori and other minority groups, women have not employed this mode of discourse nearly as much as white middle-class men, and prior to 1983 Keri Hulme was the only woman. Nevertheless, to attempt to place Hulme within rigid demarcations of gender, race or overt political movements is to miss the point of her contribution to New Zealand culture, which has been based precisely on the destabilisation of such categories. Keri Hulme has managed to antagonise all sides in two extremely political causes (Maori self-determination and feminism) by steadfastly holding onto a perception of herself as an androgynous mongrel. Her consistent "critique of binarism"[194] (Maori/Pakeha, Male/Female) has made it impossible for politically motivated critics to secure her to their cause.

The remainder of "Mauri" looked at bicultural poets writing in English in New Zealand since the nineteen-seventies, including Alistair Campbell, Rowley Habib, Apirana Taylor, Brian Potiki, Harry Dansey, Mahlon Nepia, Rangi Faith, Mana Cracknell, Haare Williams, T. K. Tainui, Hone Tuwhare and Keri Hulme herself. Hulme discussed the poems thematically under the titles "*Looking at the Past*", "*Looking at the Present*", "*Listening to the Land*" and "*Aspects of Death*". It was in keeping with her theme of biculturalism that Hulme emphasised each author's complete ancestry, noting that Alistair Campbell is of Rarotongan and Scots descent, Rowley Habib of Ngati Pitiroirangi and Lebanese, Brian Potiki Ngai Tahu and English and so on.[195] Hulme seemed to imply that biculturalism involved more than simply Maori and Pakeha lineages, and that New Zealand's bicultural heritage was in fact a mode of multiculturalism organised around two distinct poles. It is typical of her personal philosophy that her enunciation of biculturalism did not imply the setting up of a new hegemonic binary. Instead it was a means by which personal freedom and individuality could be expressed within a broadly nationalistic framework. In this sense Hulme signalled a discontinuity between herself and all other practitioners of

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[193]Leggott, 'Opening the Archive'.
[194]Leonard Wilcox, 'Postmodernism or Anti-Modernism?', Landfall 155 (September 1985), p.357.
[195]Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', pp.296ff.

literary critique in New Zealand, who have typically set up prescriptive interpretative templates that tended to be exclusive rather than inclusive. In her own way Hulme has subscribed to this very interpretation of her thought:

> . . . I cannot truthfully say that I wholeheartedly believe in a. the concept of destiny and b. the concept that things really are as organised as that. I really think that either it's a great joke and we've not seen the point of it and we never will see the point of it or its random but because its such an amazingly huge picture of randomness to grasp we put our semblance of order on it.[196]

"Mauri" not only set up a theoretical framework for the study of bicultural poetry in New Zealand. It also provided a basic canon that organised the poems into distinct modes. "*Looking at the Past*" suggested that one of these modes was based upon an act of historical empathy. Alistair Campbell's poem "Reflections on Some Great Chiefs" was a case in point:

> By any standards
> Tamaiharanui was a mean man -
> meaner even than Te Rauparaha.
> He was a chief of soaring rank -
> a sun so bright
> he could extinguish lesser lights
> merely by his presence.
> Such sacredness was hard to bear . . .
> Even a colleague, for a chance offence,
> confronted sudden death
> pinpointed in his pupils.
> None had a second chance
> to learn his lesson.[197]

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[196]Smith, 'Constructing the Author', p.26.
[197]Alistair Campbell, cited in, Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', p.296.

Campbell entered into the past in order to draw out what had been learned through the Maori oral tradition and more mainstream history, and Hulme's exegesis of his work explained his motives and the lesser known elements to the poem in order to facilitate a higher appreciation amongst non-Maori readers. As "Mauri" continued this didactic element became stronger, as Hulme attempted to heighten appreciation of bicultural poetry in New Zealand by way of reference to technical terms and Maori concepts. Introducing "*Looking at the Present*", for example, Hulme told her audience that "[a]mong many city youth, gangs have taken the place of family and tribe. Black Power, Mongrel Mob, and Nga Tama Toa have chapters in most cities, providing tight violent but accepting groups for disaffected young people".[198] The extract that followed ('Tribal 2' from Brian Potiki) would have lost much of its power for an international audience had Hulme not provided her explanatory note, a situation that perhaps applies to all poetry, but is especially necessary in the context of New Zealand bicultural poetry. The reader gets the feeling that Hulme was carefully preparing an audience for her fellow bicultural poets, so that the specificity of their content did not become insuperable.

In explaining Apirana Taylor's "Sad Joke on a Marae" Hulme was forced to delve into various aspects of Maori and New Zealand language in order to make it readily understandable:

> *Tihei Mauriora* is a phrase commonly used to begin formal speeches. It can be translated as "Salute the breath of life". *Kupe, Paikea, Te Kooti, Rewi (Maniapoto),* and *Te Rauparaha* are great people from the past; *tekoteko* is the upright wooden figure, who stands at the top of the front of a meeting-house. *Tu the freezing-worker* refers to Tu, the God of war and killing, and freezing works is a New Zealand euphemism for slaughter-house: Many Maori work at such places. *Ngati D.B.* refers to *ngati* or family, and D.B. is short for Dominion Breweries, and a popular brand of beer;

[198]Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', p.299.

and *taiaha* is a sword-club with one end shaped like a tongue.[199]

As Hulme noted, "[t]here is nothing in Taylor's poem that wouldn't be instantly comprehensible to a New Zealander of any background",[200] but she also pointed out that bicultural poets often inserted more difficult phrases and concepts in order to baffle the non-Maori reader. Henare Dewes' poem "Whakarongo" was included to indicate how the use of pidgin English and Maori could easily confuse an uninitiated reader - in this instance bicultural poetry became a tool for undermining Eurocentric prejudices and asserting the exclusivity of certain cultural traits:

> Who will gaff the tuna stream
> and tickle nga taraute
> and collect the kina
> kautai and pipi
> pick the puha and bitter cress
> set the hinaki
> make the bread to buy the kai
> for te Huatahi
> eh! . . . who![201]

The section titled "*Listening to the Land*" required less explanation from Hulme (apart from specific Maori words) who simply noted that "The Maori relationship to the land is intense. Land is not an exploitable resource: it is *Papatuanuku*, earth mother".[202] This section of "Mauri" began to link back to Hulme's earlier enunciation of "Mauri" as a concept, by alluding to the land as the source of creative energy and fruitfulness. It became clear that Keri Hulme's development of bicultural poetry in New Zealand was intimately tied to an understanding of the "numinous"[203] and a typically Maori kind of spiritual awareness. ". . . Maori spirituality becomes the

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[199]ibid, p.301 (Hulme's emphasis).
[200]ibid.
[201]ibid.
[202]ibid, p.302 (Hulme's emphasis).
[203]ibid, p.290.

enabling condition of a form of romantic nationalism, centred on race, culture and land"[204], a mode of "spiritualised nationalism"[205] that had hitherto been inarticulate. Unlike Monte Holcroft's application of the term numinous (which gathered its focus from central European nature philosophies), Hulme's was a purely indigenised understanding that gathered elements already present within the Maori spiritual world and presented them within the context of modern bicultural poetry. Her symbol suggested depth and utility rather than simplicity and pastiche. This became even more apparent in *"Aspects of Death"*, because the spiritual qualities of bicultural New Zealand poetry were drawn out by Hulme and forced to adhere to contemporary belief systems. As Hulme noted, many beliefs surrounding death that were held by the pre-European Maori (such as the survival after death of the primary life qualities *mauri, manawa ora, hau* and *wairua*) were still held by people in 1981.[206] It becomes apparent that the "spiritual loneliness that seems to deaden the heart of so many Pakeha New Zealanders"[207] was simply not present in bicultural poetry. Rather, the tone was one of a truly indigenised and ancient aesthetic that retained contemporary relevance, as in Keri Hulme's own poem, "Nga Kehua".

In closing, "*Writing For a Future People, Drawing on the Past*" acknowledged that bicultural poetry in New Zealand had only a short heritage - perhaps ten years prior to 1981. Hulme noted that the general trend seemed to be towards references to ". . . Maori thought and mythology and ways of expression . . .",[208] but as the poems were written in English they also derived much from the European, or "*taha Pakeha*"[209] side. After extracting poems by Michael Stevens and herself, Hulme left the final word to Hemi Baxter (James K. Baxter) who she saw as exemplifying the Maori value *aroha* which means "love, care, concern, active help, compassion and

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[204]Mark Williams, 'Keri Hulme and Negative Capability', in Mark Williams, Leaving the Highway: Six Contemporary New Zealand Novelists (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990), p.97.
[205]ibid.
[206]Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand', p.305.
[207]ibid, p.294.
[208]ibid, p.307.
[209]ibid.

support on a communal and personal basis".[210] There was a clear indication here that Hulme did hold hope for a truly united Aotearoa-New Zealand, with bicultural poetry providing a discursive bridge between the two main protagonists in such a development. In closing "Mauri" with a poem from a Pakeha who adopted Maori customs and beliefs, Hulme not only provided a symbol for future reconciliation but an interesting mirror to herself, perhaps suggesting that mathematical bloodcounts mean far less than true belief and active practice:

> Not knowing who I am or where my road is,
> I stand on the worn-out bridge and ask you to protect us,
>
> These Pakeha hermit crabs who are climbing into the shell of the pa,
> Some stupid, some wise, and the Maori souls among us
>
> Who are salt in the porridge, yeast in the new bread -
> E koro, our eyes are dark, our pain is great, we are sticks broken
> to light a bonfire.
>
> Yet endlessly the water rises in the deep hole under the willows,
> Moving, coiling, whirling, at the moment when the world is made
>
> And your sign is in our heart - the shape of our lives together is
> your own shape.[211]

"Mauri" was also interesting in terms of Hulme's development of The Bone People. This work has generated a lot of national and international criticism and can safely be viewed as a central text in the development of post-colonial discourse, yet there has been no reference in any of this criticism to "Mauri" and what it implies in terms of Hulme's own philosophical and aesthetic sensibility. It is as if Hulme's critics have attempted to identify Hulme's aesthetic from her one central work,

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[210]ibid, p.309.
[211]James K. Baxter, cited in, Hulme, 'Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand, p.309.

without recourse to an important essay where she spelled out her position in stark terms. It is surely significant in terms of The Bone People that Hulme had already codified her authorial interests in "Mauri" two years previously, and a lack of acknowledgement of this fact has lent subsequent criticism a certain lack of direction. During the nineteen-eighties The Bone People was appropriated by many critics in order to define just what "post-colonialism" was, in an interesting situation whereby the text was used to justify an extension of the concept regardless of Hulme's own purposes. In terms of logic this can only be seen as an example of ex-post facto hypothesising[212] that is typical of literary-critical analysis. From the outset post-colonialism was as much political as literary:

> Post-colonialism can be seen as more than the aftermath of national imperialism alone. The term can be used to describe a state of crisis or a turning point in relation to any group whose cultural and political sovereignty has been undermined by the colonising actions of a more powerful and therefore dominant group. Feminism, for example has many of the same analyses and projects for women as movements for oppressed races and cultures. Two of these projects are the rewriting of history, and the renaming of experiences, lands, peoples, and even individuals, to express the perspectives of the colonised and enable self-sovereignty. The rewriting of history aims initially to demonstrate that it is possible to see history as the 'written' account of events from the perspectives of the dominant group. Marginalised perspectives, those of marginalised groups or individuals, remain silent. The rewriting allows a voice to those perspectives, and enables the entry of new material into history, challenging the hegemony of the authorised version. It is not a large step to see how fiction may enact this process.[213]

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[212]'Hypothesising after the fact'. That is, the term 'post-colonial' is posited from general observation (and political orientation) and then *deductive* (as opposed to inductive) reasoning is employed in order to prove the veracity of the term.
[213]Chris Prentice, 'Re-Writing Their Stories, Renaming Themselves: Post-Colonialism and Feminism in the Fictions of Keri Hulme and Audrey Thomas', Span 23 (September 1986), p.69.

Criticism of The Bone People was often more centred on using the text as an example of post-colonial discourse than something created by Keri Hulme for her own motives. In defence of the post-colonial stance, "[i]t is difficult to think of a modern intellectual practice that has been subjected to more self-criticism".[214] Post-colonialism has proved to be an area of research particularly conducive to radical discord.

The appropriation of writers like Hulme by critics determined to advance the cause of post-colonialism was a major factor in the New Zealand literary scene during the nineteen-eighties. There was serious confusion about the new trend towards post-modernism and its implications for cultures struggling to gain a sense of identity amidst an international climate that asserted the need for moral relativism and the dissolution of nationalistic concerns. Despite overseas critics from Barthes to Foucault theorising post-modernism as a post-nationalist phenomenon, New Zealand critics have generally constructed the term so that it remains "favourable for defining a national identity . . .".[215] Lawrence Jones has suggested that "post-colonialism" (or its less inclusive synonym "post-provincialism") was used as an escape from or an alternative to international post-modernism. It was a means by which post-modern concerns like gender and racial equality could be employed within an inherently nationalist framework.[216] Within this environment The Bone People came to be seen more as a symbol for the post-colonial experience than as the product of Keri Hulme as a person. "Mauri" corrects this imbalance by making explicit Hulme's own personal interests (many of which do, of course, coincide with the post-colonial project). It is essential to note in this context that Hulme was part of a women's "avant-garde"[217] that was more interested in definitions of self than political involvement. The Bone People actually took ten years to write, prompted by a

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[214]Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley, 'Introduction' to Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton, Willy Maley, eds, Postcolonial Criticism (New York: Longman, 1997), p.1.
[215]Wilcox, 'Postmodernism or Anti-Modernism?', p.348.
[216]Lawrence Jones, 'Modernism, Myth, and Postmodernism: Keri Hulme and C. K. Stead', in Lawrence Jones, Barbed Wire and Mirrors: Essays on New Zealand Prose (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1990), p.282.
[217]Bronwen Levy, 'Women Experimenting Down Under: Reading the Difference', Kunapipi 7 (1985), p.170.

recurring dream that began while Hulme was tobacco picking in Motueka in 1972.[218] With no literary training and a personal antipathy towards any kind of external advice or overtly political agenda, Hulme set about writing the novel at the same time that she began her full-time writing career. Thus, "Mauri" can usefully be interpreted as a late summation of the concerns that led her to write The Bone People.

Like Wystan Curnow's and C. K. Stead's, Keri Hulme's contribution to New Zealand literary critique was individualistic. Each author in this later period of the tradition accepted that critical opinion in New Zealand had splintered, and it was therefore necessary to make a personal offering. Similarly, the intellectual and cultural environment in New Zealand during the nineteen-eighties was highly politicised and any writer brave enough to engage her contemporaries in debate in this manner had to be well equipped to handle critical censure and personal attacks. The body of work that constituted New Zealand literature had expanded so much since World War Two that debates took on a new significance and any new ideas were subjected to rigorous appraisal. Moreover, the development of New Zealand as part of a wider international community led to demands that its intellectual products were of a high standard. Literary and cultural writing would no longer be confined to New Zealand and this made it necessary to have writers that could stand up to international, rather than merely local, scrutiny. Like Stead's essay, "The Maori and Literature" critiqued New Zealand's received literary history, implying that bicultural poetry had been ignored in a manner indicative of broader cultural failings. Literary critique fitted in very well with the dominant tone of cultural redefinition demanded by this decade, because it allowed literature to be used as both evidence of a cultural condition and a means of educating the New Zealand critical community. The self-reflexiveness of critique also fitted in well with Hulme's project, because it allowed her to explore her own cultural heritage and mark a position for herself (and people like her) within New Zealand culture. New Zealand's literary community was beginning to widen considerably, and Hulme's voice provided yet another perspective. In this context it was refreshing when Roger Horrocks and the And group stood together and asserted the need for a rationalisation of New Zealand's literary and cultural heritage. The last example of literary critique to be examined in this

[218]Kedgley, Our Own Country, pp.92-94.

thesis was pleasantly personal, unaffected and attentive to the role that writers like those examined here had played in the development of New Zealand literature.

iv] Roger Horrocks, The Invention of New Zealand, 1983.

The final author to be examined in this thesis exhibited quite different tendencies to Keri Hulme. Whereas Hulme's essay was individualistic, spiritual and designed for audiences both in New Zealand and overseas, Roger Horrocks' essay "The Invention of New Zealand"[219] was collaborative, post-structuralist and designed almost wholly for a New Zealand audience. "The Invention of New Zealand" provides a useful summation of the themes that this thesis has explored, as well as introducing the post-modern themes that arrived in New Zealand with the onset of the nineteen-eighties.

Horrocks' essay was published in the first issue of And in 1983, and attempted to make sense of New Zealand's critics of criticism and contextualise New Zealand's tradition of critical "invention". The broad ranging tendencies of literary critique as a tradition also become apparent, because Horrocks' essay took a broad cultural view that included art criticism. In this sense "The Invention of New Zealand" can be seen to parallel McCormick's Letters and Art in New Zealand, because it acknowledged the interdependence of poetry and art in general. In a historical sense the essay is also significant, because it adopted a post-structural approach to the past that used various texts as evidence for New Zealand's contemporary cultural status (the tendencies of the "New Historicism" were apparent here). Indeed, "The Invention of New Zealand" presented an early attempt at intellectual history: an attempt to make explicit the ideas that have determined the path of both New Zealand literature and criticism.

Roger Horrocks was born in Auckland in 1941, and after schooling at Edendale Primary, Kowhai Intermediate and Mount Albert Grammar School, attended Auckland University where he gained a B.A. and M.A. (Hons). After being introduced to Allen Tate and the New Criticism through C. K. Stead and Kendrick Smithyman at Auckland University, Horrocks moved to America to study under him at the University of Minnesota. From 1964-1966 he took graduate classes at both the

[219]Roger Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', And 1(1983), pp.9-30.

University of Minnesota and the University of California. Tate had wanted him to do a Ph.D. on Hart Crane but he was enticed to the West Coast and became interested in Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Allen Ginsberg. Financial pressures forced him to return to New Zealand in 1967, where he was appointed as a lecturer in the Auckland English department and completed a Ph.D. under C. K. Stead. His first course introduced New Zealand students to contemporary American poetry and over the next few years he taught Ian Wedde, Alan Brunton, Jan Kemp and Russell Haley and became involved in the New Zealand literary scene through publication in a variety of important literary periodicals ranging from Freed, Parallax, And, Antic, Splash and A Brief Description of the Whole World. Horrocks' involvement with these periodicals often only consisted of one or two essays, but he acted as co-editor on issues three and four of And. In 1975 he began teaching in Film Studies where he developed an interest in French critical theory and later introduced Auckland University's first M.A. course in theory that looked at Barthes, Lacan, Eco and Althusser amongst others. In this sense Horrocks can be seen as instrumental in bringing the "linguistic turn" to New Zealand and it has been a feature of his publications ever since. He has published in New Zealand film, television and experimental film making as well as New Zealand and American poetry, and is actively involved with the film and television industries. A major contribution was also made by Horrocks (in collaboration with Wystan Curnow) in 1984 with the publication of Figures in Motion, which publicised the art of Len Lye (a significant and hitherto unknown New Zealand artist).[220] In 2001 Horrocks published a full-length biography of Lye as well.[221]

"The Invention of New Zealand" was published in And/1 in 1983. And deserves special mention, because the project was largely collaborative and the essays it contained all display a certain unity of purpose. Unlike any other example of literary critique examined here, "The Invention of New Zealand" was reflective of a broader school of literary-critical thought that programmatically set about deconstructing New Zealand's established literary and cultural norms. The magazine was closely associated with the University of Auckland English Department, and aimed at using

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[220]Roger Horrocks, Letter to the Author, July 04, 2001.
[221]Roger Horrocks, Len Lye (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001).

new models of reading established by the post-structural school of Derrida, Barthes, Lacan and Althusser. It must be noted here that And should not be seen as "post-modern". It was "post-structural" and eschewed many of the more radical innovations of post-modern periodicals like Parallax (especially regarding glossy production).

"The Invention of New Zealand" also speaks to an interesting aspect of New Zealand's tradition of literary critique; the increasing tendency of the essays to refer not only to primary literature, but criticism of that literature. When the mode started the essays tended to speak exclusively to primary sources, but a natural extension towards criticism occurred once New Zealand's critical tradition had become established. In discussing primary examples of New Zealand literature, writers soon found it necessary to mention the secondary criticism that had evolved around those works, either agreeing or refuting prior critical judgements. "The Invention of New Zealand" was an interesting example of the mode for this very reason, because it historicised Allen Curnow's A Book of New Zealand Verse to the point where it almost appeared fictive. Whereas other practitioners of the mode examined literary products, Horrocks pointed out the literary, imaginative aspects to Curnow's criticism. As the mode developed over the course of the second half of the twentieth century this tendency increased, and it would be fitting that future examinations of the tradition included these "critics of criticism" within the canon alongside those who critique the primary literature.

"The Invention of New Zealand" exhibited many facets of what has been variously described as "the Linguistic Turn",[222] "deconstruction"[223] or (to use a broader term) "poststructuralism"[224] - key terms in intellectual circles during the nineteen-eighties that require further discussion, because they represented different

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[222]Richard Rorty, ed., The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
[223]Catherine Belsey, 'Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text', in Robert Davis and Ronald Schleiffer, eds, Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies (New York: Longman, 1998), pp.377-392.
[224]Michael Ryan, 'Marxism and Poststructuralism', in Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris, eds, The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol.9: Twentieth Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.101.

manifestations of a subtle change in Western intellectuals' perception of themselves and the world. The use of critical techniques derived from the thought of Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and Michel Foucault by Horrocks and the And group had important implications for the New Zealand literary scene, because it effectively enabled them to deconstruct the critical apparatus that had been developing since the inception of literary critique during World War Two and promote new ways of reading texts.

Post-structuralism has many manifestations, but it was essentially a reaction against the rational, positivist philosophy of western society that had been developing since Plato, based upon a belief that human cognition is grounded upon an interaction between the knower and the known that can be empirically verified. Language and speech in this conception of human experience are viewed as continuous with reality, meaning that they refer directly to a knowable and communicable world: the interaction is simply between the knower and the knowable thing. Structuralist understandings such as these dominated mid-twentieth century thought.[225] Following in the wake of Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger , however, this staple interpretation of language and speech began to dissolve. During the late sixties and seventies (and to differing degrees), Derrida, de Man and Foucault each began to assert that Nietzsche and Heidegger were correct in denying the validity of the western philosophical approach and asserting that human existence was better described in terms of "Being"[226] and a parallel "will to power"[227] that invoked the "Dasein"[228] (or, "Being-in-the-World"[229]) of experience. Belief in the structurally verifiable nature of language was undermined.

"Being-in-the-World" implied to Heidegger a constant questioning of stimuli and

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[225]Structuralism was a less complicated theory of language than post-structuralism, and simply asserted that cultural norms and discourses are best understood through the structure of language. It did not attend to the Being-in-the-World of experience and the human "will to power".
[226]Martin Heidegger, A History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena, trans. T. Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp.135-143.
[227]Robert Holub, 'Modernism, Modernity, Modernisation', in Knellwolf and Norris, eds, The Cambridge History, p.283.
[228]Heidegger, A History of the Concept of Time, pp.143ff.
[229]ibid, pp.151ff.

response in the human subject, disclosing levels of mystification that denied resolution from the positivist sciences. Suddenly it came to be accepted in many circles (and hotly contested in others) that human cognition was not so much an interaction between knower and known, as an interaction between signifier and (ultimately unknowable) signified. Verifiable truth dissolved in a cloud of relativism and underlying epistemological premises (that had been held as true for centuries) broke down.[230] Deconstruction aimed to promote close readings of texts in order to unmask the popular conception that language was transparent, that it said what it meant simply, logically and unambiguously (Wittgenstein had already famously failed to demonstrate this proposition). Literary criticism became an endless process of unravelling, of disclosing hidden meanings and the subversive nature of the human will to power. The "linguistic turn" changed the literary experience into a grand process of mystification that could only be reversed through absolute attention to the text as a thing-in-itself that could garner an infinite number of readings. Roland Barthes in S/Z[231] put forward a grammatology of language that analysed the minutiae of sentence structure in order to unmask the author's underlying will to power, and feminist critics began to deconstruct male authors to disclose their rhetoric of domination and phallocentric thinking.[232] Many commentators viewed this process as frivolous and tending towards irrationalism, but post-structural techniques swept through the intellectual world with real potency. Their appearance in New Zealand with the And group signalled the appearance of a system of thought that was essentially iconoclastic towards the cultural mainstream and bent on showing New Zealanders up to themselves, breaking long-standing cultural myths, and moving towards more sophisticated modes of reading. Literary criticism became as much concerned with cultural traits and collective expressions of the will to power (and domination) as in the explication of specific texts. Acknowledgement of their own agency in the deconstruction of these myths and their obvious love for New Zealand literature were perhaps the only elements that softened the biting critiques to follow.

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[230]Ernest Gellner, '*Relativismus uber Alles'*, in Ernest Gellner, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.40-72.
[231]Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wong, 1974).
[232]Diana Fuss, 'Reading Like a Feminist', in Davis and Schleifer, eds, Contemporary Literary Criticism, pp.580-591.

Writers who contributed to And (like Leigh Davis, Roger Horrocks, Simon During, Alex Calder, Wystan Curnow and John Geraets) were more concerned to apply international trends in literary theory to New Zealand literature than to programmatically bring post-modernity to New Zealand. Much more important to these writers was a post-structural appraisal of New Zealand literary-critical theory, and in particular a deconstruction of Allen Curnow's various and hegemonic pronouncements that made "reality" the special concern of New Zealand literature. Their prose was often pointedly complex in order to press their theoretical concerns, and to assert a clear break between them and their predecessors. Their aim was to explore the essential precepts of New Zealand culture and literature without perpetuating them:

> A first characteristic [of their oppositional view] centres upon the abstraction 'New Zealand literature' . . . . The abstraction is less elusive if it is employed as a term that isolates the process of reading, writing, and publishing in New Zealand, providing industry contours, and not solely as a term that attempts to describe the (idealised) quality of some literary product. Here this emphasis shift has never been promoted . . . . Ignoring the age of this theory, and its crucial dependence on the insistences of Allen Curnow, we assume that the extant metaphor of connection between 'New Zealand' and 'literature' is still the mould or the hook-and-eye model of writing as it is informed by, or connects with, New Zealand reality.[233]

Various aspects of the And project were suggestive of broader trends towards post-modern practice (if not theory). The periodical was planned for obsolescence after only four issues for instance, the aim being to make a lightning raid on the bastions of New Zealand critical theory and undercut the traditional power of well established periodicals like Landfall and Islands. The cover of issue one used a still from the Western movie "The Man From God's Country" (MGM, 1954) with the words "Ready - Coming In" stencilled over the top in a pithy attempt to announce the arrival of post-structural theory to New Zealand with an aspect of popular culture. No

[233]Leigh Davis, 'Set Up: August 1983', And 1 (1983), p.2.

attempt was made to produce a uniform format that would make the magazine fit into the traditional New Zealand periodical market either. Conversely, the editors simply photocopied contributions and stapled them together, so that each issue had a variety of fonts and formats depending on the exigencies of each writer's typewriter or word processor. Little sums up the attitude taken by the editors of the first issue (Alex Calder and Leigh Davis) better than their call for contributions:

> SUBSCRIPTION RATES - $3.50 PER ISSUE WHERE YOU CAN GET IT.
> MAIL ORDER TO (INCLUDING POSTAGE)
>
> ALEX CALDER
> ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY
> PRIVATE BAG, AUCKLAND, N.Z.
>
> OR
>
> LEIGH DAVIS
> 4A WESLEY ROAD, WELLINGTON 1, N.Z.
>
> COPYRIGHT - ALL RIGHTS REVERT TO THE WRITERS ON PUBLICATION. SUBMISSIONS - SEE IF YOU FIT. CLOSING DATE ISSUE TWO LAST DAY JANUARY 1984, SEND TO ABOVE ADDRESSES. SEND XEROX READY COPY ONLY, NO EDITORIAL WORK PERFORMED BY EDITORS APART FROM SELECTION, PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION. MIXED GOLFBALLS/DAISYWHEELS ARE DESIRABLE (STRANGERS ARE WELCOMED HERE). ISSUE TWO WILL BE MORE SURPRISING, MORE ARTWORK, MORE NON-LITERATURE. WE WOULD LIKE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH SOME WELL ADVERTISED, TARGETTED, BOOK SPACE FOR YOUR PROJECTS, WE ARE INTERESTED IN LITERARY AND CULTURAL THEORY AND THEIR OBVERSES. DISTRIBUTION IS SMALL (100 COPIES INITIALLY). THE MAGAZINE WILL ALWAYS BE INCIPIENT. WE WANT IT TO MOVE RIGHT ALONG. AS CONSIDERED NOW, THIS IS A FINITE PROJECT WITH FOUR PARTS

ONLY. COST FOR THE FOUR - $14.00.[234]

Much of the thrust of And was to re-appraise New Zealand literature as a concept, because it was felt that it had been developed unreflectively and had effectively ossified New Zealand reading habits towards social realism and a narrow cultural nationalism that was anathema to developing international trends. It was not that the And group wanted to prompt specific new modes of writing, rather they wanted to develop new modes of reading so that the hegemony of writers like McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow could be broken. Issue one included not only Horrocks' "The Invention of New Zealand", but also an essay by John Geraets titled "The New Zealand Anthology: Initiating an Archaeology" and another by Simon During titled "Towards a Revision of Local Critical Habits". All three of these essays displayed an attempt to halt the advance of critical theory in New Zealand and examine what was already present. Rather than moving forward (even towards post-modernism), the And group demanded that the critical apparatus developed since 1940 be closely examined and read in different (more critically aware) ways that took into account broader cultural trends and the interaction of literature with its cultural environment. In essence they turned the precepts of literary critique into a working (and interestingly finite) programme. Essays such as Horrocks' "No Theory Permitted on These Premises"[235] and "To Postulate a Ready and An Understanding Reader"[236] forthrightly set out the demands placed upon New Zealand readers by both their cultural situation and recent critical theory. And was at once a taking-stock of, and a pithy attack on, New Zealand's literary mainstream, as in these diagrams[237] taken from Horrocks' "No Theory Permitted on These Premises" (1984):

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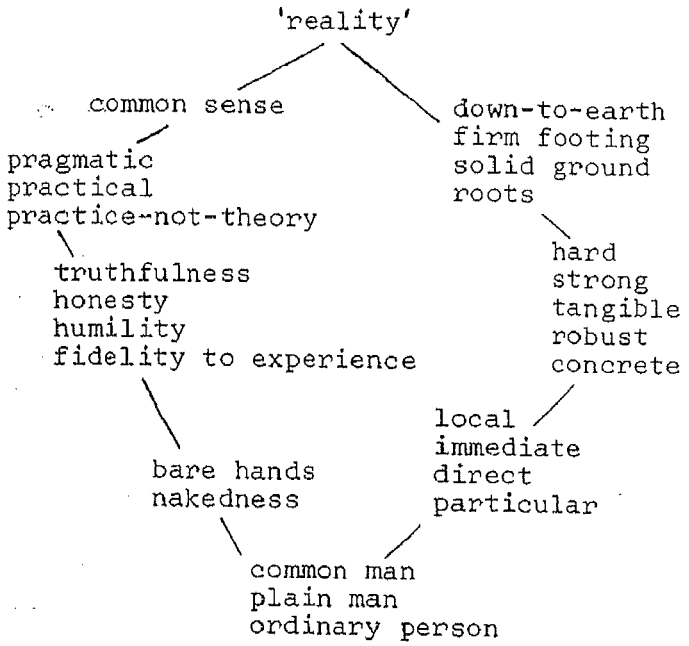
[234]Alex Calder and Leigh Davis, And 1 (1983).
[235]Roger Horrocks, 'No Theory Permitted on These Premises', And 2 (February 1984), pp.119-137.
[236]Roger Horrocks, 'To Postulate a Ready and An Understanding Reader', And 3 (October 1984), pp.120-130.
[237]Horrocks, 'No Theory Permitted on These Premises", pp.123-124.


'reality'
common sense
down-to-earth
firm footing
solid ground
roots
pragmatic
practical
practice-not-theory
truthfulness
honesty
humility
fidelity to experience
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strong
tangible
robust
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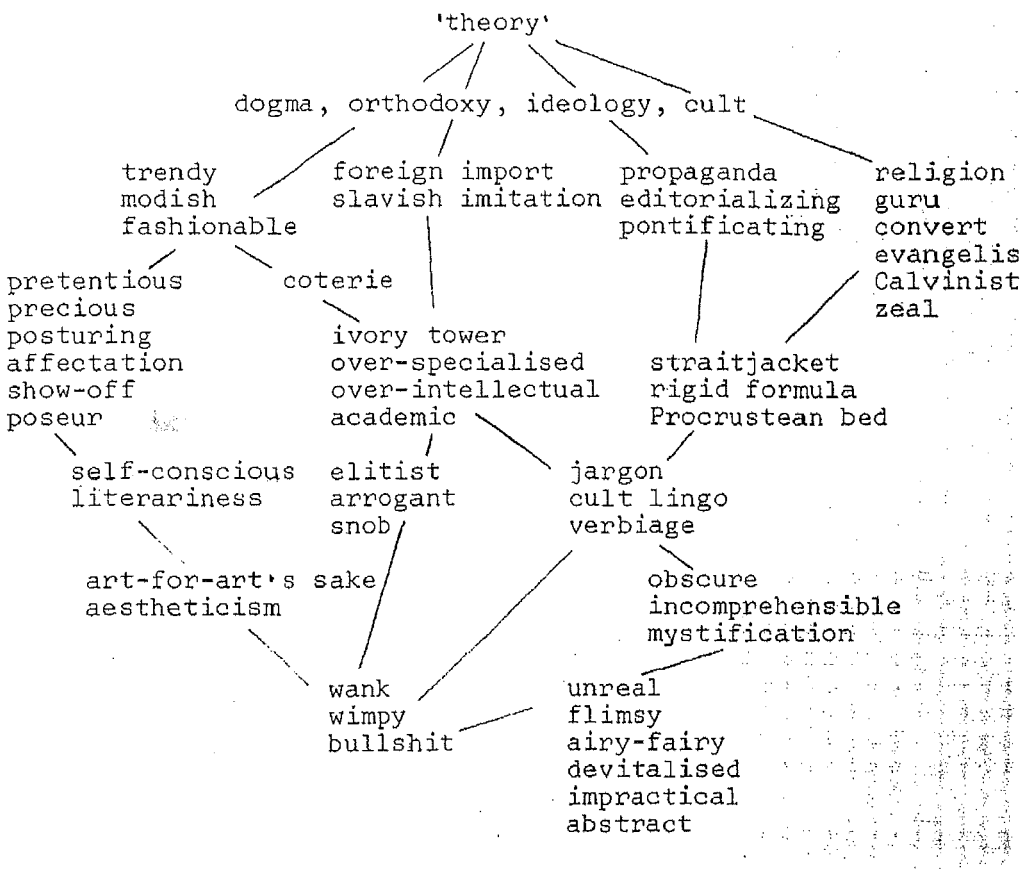
local
immediate
direct
particular
bare hands
nakedness
common man
plain man
ordinary person


'theory'
dogma, orthodoxy, ideology, cult
trendy
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foreign import
slavish imitation
propaganda
editorializing
pontificating
religion
guru
convert
evangelis
Calvinist
zeal
pretentious
precious
posturing
affectation
show-off
poseur
coterie
ivory tower
over-specialised
over-intellectual
academic
straitjacket
rigid formula
Procrustean bed
self-conscious
literariness
elitist
arrogant
snob
jargon
cult lingo
verbiage
art-for-art's sake
aestheticism
obscure
incomprehensible
mystification
wank
wimpy
bullshit
unreal
flimsy
airy-fairy
devitalised
impractical
abstract

"The Invention of New Zealand" took the form of a simulacrum[238] of Horrocks' feelings about New Zealand literature, mainly through reference to the thought of Allen Curnow. Section One was titled "The Reality Gang"[239] and looked at Curnow as "a magician, a maker of fictions, yet always in the language of 'reality' or 'truth'",[240] while section two took the form of a flashback to Horrocks' youth as he travelled the country with a beaten up copy of Curnow's 1960 Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse. Section Three introduced New Zealand art to the discussion, and looked at ways in which art and literature coincided, especially in terms of the "deconstruction" of New Zealand's critical apparatus (which was much more developed in artistic circles by this period). In Horrocks' final sections his simulacrum was completed through a playful piecing together of various poems from the Penguin Book to suggest common failures of the imagination amongst New Zealand poets (and his own reactions to commonly used themes). The very idiosyncrasy of Horrocks' essay was suggestive of his aim. He did not want to promote yet another reading of Allen Curnow and New Zealand poetry that would become monolithic, rather, he wrote in a personal style that took into account his own reactions as a New Zealand reader in order to make his own reading habits explicit. The construction of a simulacrum rather than a historical or literary-critical narrative enabled Horrocks to step outside the discourse of New Zealand literary critique and hold a mirror up to his own assumptions. The technique was sophisticated and typically post-structural, although totally unprescriptive due to its intensely individualistic tone.

Section One, "The Reality Gang" opened with a brief story by Horrocks that later turned out to be in reference to Allen Curnow, the "caretaker" of New Zealand literature:

> It's an old country. One day out in the back of beyond you come across a small town, run-down because many of its young people have headed for the city. In an unpretentious

[238]Geddie, ed., Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary, p.1030: "an image, a semblance".
[239]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.9.
[240]ibid.

> building you discover a local art gallery-cum-museum. A solitary caretaker puffing a pipe turns on the lights and you are startled by the paintings on the walls. You smile at some of the quaintness but basically you are very impressed by this local school. There is a pleasant sense of artists having worked closely together. Here are old images of heaven and hell that now have a surreal air. You'd like to understand this odd iconography but the caretaker has a curiously literal approach - he tells local stories about the paintings as though he were pointing things out to you through a window. Still, he's a compelling talker, and the small town has changed so little over the years that it's not difficult to feel your way back inside the artists' frame of mind.[241]

Horrocks' simulacrum posited Curnow as a caretaker-magician who curated and collected in the process of doggedly searching out New Zealand "reality". Allen Ginsberg's "Wichita Vortrex Sutra" was then used to imply the "magical" qualities behind Curnow's prose (comparable to the Mauri used by Keri Hulme in her essay).[242] Curnow's attitude is perhaps best described through reference to one of his own poems:

> Cleverer than ever, O atom brain,
> Nature you dread, and next to nature, art:
> Jack without magic springs his traps in vain
> against these giants and genii of the heart.[243]

Horrocks was drawing out the alchemical, magical qualities implicit in Allen Curnow's prose. Aware that the Maori world was not his of right (and wary of earlier Pakeha attempts to claim it), Curnow attempted to bring into being a sophisticated cultural aesthetic out of a barren landscape, in the face of obvious cultural and

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[241]ibid.
[242]ibid, p.10.
[243]Allen Curnow, Jack Without Magic (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1946), p.1.

historical inadequacies. To Roger Horrocks several decades later the effect became analogous to "transforming earth into gold".[244] Viewing Curnow as a "homo faber"[245] in this way posed some difficult questions for Horrocks, however (as it did his contemporaries). Curnow's two anthologies (and especially his 1960 Penguin) defined the canon of New Zealand poetry and provided broad parameters for the study of New Zealand literature in general. The level of discursive power exerted by Curnow seemed to demand further examination, especially when Horrocks pondered the fact that he had been raised on the older writer's poetry and prose. For Horrocks and the And group it was time to "enjoy the Penguin Book [sic] as artifact, as an intricate, stylised genre something like The Western"[246] in order to better appreciate its influence over local critical thought.

Use of the word "genre"[247] itself suggested that Horrocks was attending to a common theme in New Zealand literature, with The Penguin Book at the centre (this thesis would place literary critique at the centre). Horrocks suggested that this theme consisted in the main of a heroic search to find New Zealand "reality"[248] through writing and art in a "compelling project"[249] that included alongside Allen Curnow Brasch, Baxter and others. This "secular ministry"[250] involved itself in a close relationship to its community, predicated upon a moral responsibility that demanded "[a]dventuring in search of reality . . ."[251] in the interests of personal and cultural sensibility. Horrocks' use of American imagery to put across his feelings about these "unacknowledged legislator[s]"[252] of New Zealand culture is pertinent at this point, because it effectively evoked the Wild West, lawlessness, population movement and rapid modernisation. "The Man From God's Country" was able to tame an uncouth society with his magic and lay reality bare in the process, because "[t]he best magicians are so subtle they are taken for realists - they seem to be merely pointing to

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[244]Allen Ginsberg, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.10.
[245]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand, p.10.
[246]ibid.
[247]ibid.
[248]ibid, p.11.
[249]ibid.
[250]ibid.
[251]ibid.
[252]Shelley, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand, p.11.

what is there, to powers inherent in things".[253] As an older man (and from the post-structuralist perspective), Horrocks apparently found it surprising that "the elements of choice and of rhetoric, the poet as maker rather than medium"[254] remained hidden to him for so long. Despite frequent allusions to "[p]algravian fountains and dragons . . ."[255] Horrocks read the Penguin Book in 1960 (when he was attending Auckland University) as though it were a guide to reality - a hitherto unseen New Zealand reality. "The Invention of New Zealand" displayed an energetic attempt by Horrocks to divorce himself from this notion of Curnow as arch realist and re-appraise him in terms of "[t]he magician as local minister",[256] the caretaker-magician who only lets you look through certain windows. Horrocks was aware that "Curnow may 'have found' himself 'piecing together the record of an adventure' but as I read his anthology I am constantly (and pleasantly) aware that a powerful mind is busy shaping it".[257]

Horrocks' intensely self-reflective stance in "The Invention of New Zealand" constantly worked to position Curnow and his anthology at a distance in order to analyse his contribution to New Zealand literature and culture more fully. The choice of American Western movies as a generic analogy and the identification of a broader "secular ministry"[258] in New Zealand letters all contributed to the historicising of Horrocks' elders, with a resultant increase in the range of possible interpretations. It is as though mythologising his immediate predecessors enabled Horrocks to analyse their work in a more detached manner. A. R. D. Fairburn came in for summary treatment here, with Horrocks objecting to his notion of "real culture",[259] his aversion to modern art and other more alarming tendencies in his writing such as racism, homophobia and misogyny.[260] Horrocks found it difficult to believe that in his 1960 anthology Curnow could prefer Fairburn to Baxter (this was his only real criticism of Curnow's judgement). Apart from some odd phraseology The Penguin Book

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[253]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand, p.11.
[254]ibid, pp.11-12.
[255]ibid, p.11.
[256]ibid.
[257]ibid, p.12.
[258]ibid, p.11.
[259]A. R. D. Fairburn, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.12.
[260]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zelaand', p.12.

remained close to Roger Horrocks' heart, because in "taking the Penguin Book [sic] as a whole, [he could] not imagine anyone presenting New Zealand literary nationalism to better advantage - the genre is assembled, the aesthetic is argued with outstanding skill and care".[261]

Section Two of "The Invention of New Zealand" was titled "Travels With a Penguin"[262] and took the form of a personal reminiscence. It is as though the flow of Horrocks' analysis was interrupted with memories of personal involvement, and his post-structural account gives way to remembrance before delving back into his argument:

> Flashback: The Penguin Book was ideally sized for my parka pocket. I carried it on hitch-hiking trips, reading it over a plate of sausages or a tin of Wattie's fruit salad, introducing the language to the landscape from Curious Cove to North Cape. 1983: the pages are going brown around the edges, and there are some nostalgic stains from various parts of the country.[263]

Horrocks began to blend another perspective into his narrative by viewing his own copy of The Penguin Book as an artefact in its own right, thumbed through and assimilated into Horrocks' own aesthetic sensibility. The prose of "The Invention of New Zealand" took on a syncopated feel at this point, as Horrocks interspersed his description of The Penguin Book with allusions to the art of Colin McCahon and frequent quotations from various authors in Curnow's anthology ("Snap open! He's all eyes"[264]). The section used a stream of consciousness technique that focused on The Penguin Book as an object in and of itself, by 1983 faded and with a peeling cover but suggestive to Horrocks of his own lifetime love of New Zealand literature. Horrocks let his prose follow the contours of his mind as his deepening associations with Curnow's anthology brought to the surface phrases and images, leading him back to recognition that he had spent many hours peering out of this particular

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[261]ibid, p.13.
[262]ibid.
[263]ibid.
[264]ibid.

"window".[265] Horrocks' copy of The Penguin Book took on the aura of Duchamp's shovel or a painting by McCahon, mesmerising in its entirety:

> a gannet impacting.[266]

Section Three of "The Invention of New Zealand" extended Horrocks' subjective identification with the "windows" theme towards art in general, through recognition that New Zealand's art critics had contributed much to the discourse of New Zealand identity that applied to literature as well. This section was prefaced by three brief descriptions of art by Marcel Duchamp ("Fresh Widow") and Rene Magritte ("Discovery") and a post-structuralist film by Michael Snow ("Wavelength") that reached New Zealand in 1983.[267] All three of these works used the window as a central metaphor and Horrocks used them to draw his narrative towards New Zealand art during the late nineteen-sixties, when The Penguin Book held ascendancy. Horrocks' aim was to make apparent ways of reading New Zealand art that might help in an interpretation of Curnow. Peter Tomory's 1967 lecture "Imaginary Reefs and Floating Islands" was used to indicate that even when The Penguin Book was originally published critics were aware that much of the art considered staunchly realist or anti-romantic could be viewed as "a New Zealand Romanticism based on English precepts".[268] In other words, there were critics that were not taken in by Curnow's magic and understood that it was a lively and seductive construction. The point had been taken up by Wystan Curnow and C. K. Stead as well, in their refusal to believe that New Zealand writers had found an adequate alternative to romanticism, but Horrocks preferred to use art critics to make his point because they presented a means by which his personal attachment to Curnow and his anthology could be broken by looking at visual art that was also "trying to 'come to terms' with a 'new' landscape, busy making human sense of it at the same time as it's acknowledging how raw and strange it is".[269] In particular Horrocks referred to Ron Brownson's 1977 thesis on Rita Angus as an approach that allowed him to complicate previous accounts

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[265]ibid, p.14.
[266]Allen Curnow, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.14.
[267]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.17.
[268]Peter Tomory, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zelaand', p.18.
[269]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.18.

and look carefully at the relationships between art and place. Similarly, Roger Blackley's 1978 thesis "Writing Alfred Sharpe" was used by Horrocks to heighten his argument that an understanding of "textuality"[270] in art helped to strip New Zealand literature of much of its mystifying power:

> To explore Sharpe's style is to discover a way of writing about the way Sharpe paints. Merely to float through a window onto Sharpe's world is to ignore the means of representation. We need to confront the architecture, the frame, the pane.[271]

Francis Pound was also mentioned as an art critic "making the tradition new . . ."[272] through the use of deconstruction. It is as though Horrocks found it necessary to cross over into art criticism in order to analyse the literary tradition better - a significant point that hints at the disestablishment of literature (and poetry especially) as the central vehicle for cultural inquiry in New Zealand. As the visual arts (and Horrocks extended this to film) developed during the late twentieth century, interpretations of literature took on a less significant light. As Horrocks pointed out, much of this was due to Wystan Curnow and Tony Green (who edited Bulletin of New Zealand Art History). Yet even as late as 1983 Wystan Curnow was still viewed as "exotic, outside the mainstream of 'our' culture, despite twenty years of local involvements"[273]. Viewing New Zealand literature through the lens of art was not generally accepted, despite it being reasonably commonplace since McCormick's Letters and Art in New Zealand (1940). Horrocks implied that the reason for this lack of acceptance was an excessive identification with the myth weaved by Curnow and others in the secular ministry that eschewed a demystification of their art. Exposing literature as mere "art" (or even artifice) tended to take away from readers the pleasure of revelling in a new-found aesthetic. The reappraisal of female writers and artists stood as further evidence to Horrocks that the development of art criticism in New Zealand, with its attention to textuality and artifice, had "made us all more aware of the politics involved in reading

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[270]ibid, p.19.
[271]Roger Blackley, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.19.
[272]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.19.
[273]ibid, p.20.

and of the way in which a 'frame' can shape and exclude".[274]

The notion of "exclusion" was important in "The Invention of New Zealand", because Horrocks was fully aware that too deep an attachment to the literary myth had blinded many critics to the full extent of Curnow's influence over the canon. In section four this issue was discussed after positing the question: "has New Zealand poetry been re-invented in the same way as painting?".[275] In other words, has post-structuralism and its insights significantly altered the canon of New Zealand poetry established by Curnow? Has recognition of the weight of Curnow's pronouncements damaged his underlying contribution? Horrocks pointed out that during the nineteen-fifties James K. Baxter had already put forward a poetic canon that differed from Curnow's because it located its critical base in "symbolism"[276] rather than "reality".[277] Moreover, "[r]ather than rejecting the idea of 'reality', [Baxter] reinterpreted it as a kind of super-reality, deeper and more primitive".[278] "The Fire and the Anvil" was used by Horrocks to suggest a vein of interpretation proffered by Baxter but not taken up until the power of Curnow's rhetoric had dissipated in the nineteen-eighties. In particular, Horrocks was taken with Baxter's ability to blend Maori and Pakeha symbolism into a workable whole (a noticeable omission in Curnow's philosophy) through recognition of both Maori spirituality and Jungian animism. There was an implied failure in Baxter's criticism, however, as Horrocks felt that he never fully moved away from the notion of "a pure reality prior to the poem".[279] Curnow's insistence on reality remained at the core of New Zealand's search for identity until the new post-structuralist readings of his contemporaries. Leigh Davis (editor of And) came in for special mention from Horrocks for providing a reading of Allen Curnow that finally broke with the notion of reality altogether, and looked at him in a sophisticated "formalist"[280] manner similar to art critics like Francis Pound and Ron Brownson. At this point it became apparent that "The Invention of New Zealand" was in large part an apologia for post-structuralist techniques in criticism, because

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[274]ibid, p.21.
[275]ibid.
[276]James K. Baxter, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.22.
[277]James K. Baxter, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.22
[278]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.22.
[279]ibid, p.23.
[280]ibid.

Horrocks went on to discuss the tendency in New Zealand letters to ridicule any such formalist readings as "degraded aestheticism".[281] This aspect of Horrocks' essay was reflective of a clear break between practitioners of literary critique before and after 1970. The period from 1970 to 1983 saw a marked increase in formalist and post-structural interpretations of New Zealand art, in the face of a national tradition that decried such an approach as epicurean and shallow. Like Wystan Curnow and C. K. Stead before him, Horrocks felt that formalist readings were a way out of an increasingly stifling tradition that excluded as much as it included. Post-structuralism appeared as a salve to the provincial dilemma.

His post-structuralist leanings made explicit, Horrocks then moved back to a personal, even playful tone in "Faery Lands",[282] collecting together the first lines of various poems from Curnow's anthology in order to lay bare "the general ideograph"[283] of New Zealand poetry. Horrocks allowed free rein on his creative faculties with The Penguin Book and came up with a generic model of the New Zealand poem. Intimate knowledge of Curnow's anthology was used to display the underlying unity of the whole, forcing individual authors to submit to Curnow's power as editor:

First Lines Poem

Alone we are born,
Always, in these islands, meeting and parting,
And again I see the long pouring headland,

In this scarred country, this cold threshold land,
Instructed to speak of God with emphasis,
It got you at last, Bill,

Nature, earth's angel, man's antagonist,
No, I think a footsore sheep dog,

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[281]Allen Curnow, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.23.
[282]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.24.
[283]James K. Baxter, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.24.

Not by us was the unrecorded stillness,

The great south wind has covered with cloud the whole of the river-plain,

The mountains are empty,
The music ceases,

Wholehearted he can't move,
With his weapon a shovel,[284]

Horrocks then continued his reminiscence surrounding The Penguin Book, moving back to 1962 when he first realised that it did not contain many love poems - Curnow's "deserts and dragons"[285] genre omitted the "fair maidens".[286] As a playful move to correct this omission Horrocks included ten quotations, abstracted from various sources that all referred in some way to either love or critical interpretations of love poetry. In a tone that comically implied Horrocks was grasping at straws he suggested that in New Zealand, sexual surrealism (for instance) was best hidden in "the chance meeting of a mountain, a tiger, and a woman on the dissection table".[287] It was also this "menage a trois"[288] written by Keith Sinclair:

we are our own safe island,
and hold our world of cliffs and towns
and bush and farms all whole,
alive and integrated in our arms,
granting a little life from every kiss
to impregnate this rock[289]

Despite his humour, Horrocks' point was telling: "[a]s the Penguin impacts, it

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[284]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.24..
[285]Arthur Baysting, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.24.
[286]Arthur Baysting, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.24.
[287]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.25.
[288]ibid.
[289]Keith Sinclair, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.25.

gains the density of a genre".[290] After reading and re-reading Curnow's anthology, Horrocks felt that the book had gained a level of interaction with New Zealand on a deep cultural level, something akin to the collective unconscious posited by Jung and taken up by Baxter in his criticism. Such was the impact of The Penguin Book that it was difficult to extricate any reading of it from personal (and indeed, national) concerns: by 1983 it was as monolithic as a western movie in terms of its generic markers. The Penguin Book became an artifact that contained within its pages "The New Zealander",[291] hidden from direct view but implicit in Curnow's selection and prose. The New Zealand realist became an "allegorical figure"[292] "walking barefoot over red-hot fact / with a load of life that musn't be dropped".[293] In this context Allen Curnow appeared as the (slightly quixotic) puppet-master.

Horrocks' obvious preoccupation with Curnow and The Penguin Book in terms of his own artistic development was kept very much to the fore in "The Invention of New Zealand". His post-structural account allowed for a lively interaction between the anthology as artefact, and as a living part of Horrocks and New Zealand generally. In closing his essay Horrocks attended to this anxiety directly, pointing out that whereas Curnow and his contemporaries suffered terribly from "a land of settlers / With never a soul at home"[294] Horrocks' generation was different, in that their art reflected a greater acceptance of their identity, a greater calm and poise that did not rely on tension to create forward movement. There seemed to be the implication that all art involves a degree of suffering and anxiety, but (in large part because of Allen Curnow) New Zealanders no longer needed to make this the basis of their art. A more mature artistic environment with a deep underlying structure could now produce art that was less self-conscious of itself and more attendant to the vagaries of the human experience of modern life rather than simply dwelling on the paucity of artistic life in New Zealand. Nevertheless, Horrocks' point was that Curnow had yet to be supplanted as the magician of New Zealand culture and that generations of artists (both literary and visual) were indebted to his work. His extended reappraisal of Allen

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[290]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.26.
[291]Allen Curnow, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.26.
[292]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.27.
[293]A. R. D. Fairburn, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.27.
[294]Allen Curnow, cited in, Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.27.

Curnow aimed to both historicise and mythologise him:

> My approach to the Penguin Book is a non-anxious reading of anxious poems. It may seem a cheeky reading but I hope my basic respect for Allen Curnow is clear. He has been celebrated often enough as a realist - I wanted to celebrate him as a maker of artifice. 'Old father, old artificer, stand by me now . . . .' Alchemists have always concealed most of their secrets, though today Curnow does talk more explicitly of 'fictions.' He still has many tricks and poems up his sleeve - it is unwise ever to underestimate the magician of Tohunga Crescent.[295]

"The Invention of New Zealand" was the most intensely personal example of literary critique to be examined in this thesis. It had neat parallels (in its inclusion of art) to Letters and Art in New Zealand and attended closely to the dominant position held by Allen Curnow in articulations of New Zealand identity. Significantly, it provided closure to long-standing issues in New Zealand literature and managed to do this in a cultural environment that was by no means conducive to critical consensus. This was mainly because Horrocks focused on his own patterns of reading rather than other author's modes of writing, and disclosed his personal attachment to New Zealand literature in a calm and poised manner. It was also indicative of the ability of the And group as a whole to critique New Zealand literature in a balanced and intellectually sophisticated fashion.

Moreover, "The Invention of New Zealand" suggested that New Zealand literary critique had broader possibilities than analyses of New Zealand's primary literature. Horrocks' critique was not only an analysis of New Zealand literature; it demanded that New Zealand literary criticism itself needed to be faced with the "terrible learning" of critique. Techniques of literary-cultural analysis once only applied to primary literature could now be applied to the nation's criticism. "The Invention of New Zealand" was thus suggestive of a new-found maturity in New Zealand letters, predicated upon the solid foundation that had been established over the latter part of

[295]Horrocks, 'The Invention of New Zealand', p.28.

the twentieth century. In the context of the period from 1970 to 1983 this was remarkable. Authors of literary critique in this period often appeared to be embattled and extremely concerned to justify their position in anticipation of critical attack. The And group effectively softened the grounds of New Zealand literature and culture by openly declaring their attachment to it. They happily admitted that New Zealand culture was a vibrant product that could easily sustain sophisticated intellectual treatment. Undoubtedly the period from 1970 to 1983 saw the triumph of individualism in literary critique, but it also witnessed the solidification and maturation of New Zealand culture.

Conclusion: 'Imagining New Zealand: Literary Critique 1940-1983'

i] 'Overview'

New Zealand literary critique is a modal extension of the essay genre. Its formal boundaries can only be charted through recourse to the wider history of western civilisation – notably the rise of the poet-critic in antiquity, and the development of the essay form during the renaissance. Its most significant identifiable feature is its "internal mechanic", the process of critique itself, which developed out of Kantian and Hegelian philosophy. Although expressed through the essay form, literary critique is therefore most recognisable by its "transformative" aspects. By this it is meant that the mode aims to both identify aspects of culture, and alter them through imaginative insight. Although literary critique is a global phenomenon, the immediate genealogy of the New Zealand mode can be traced back to the romantic thought of literary critics like Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling. In this sense, its basic concerns can be said to have been imported to New Zealand upon settlement in 1840; a date that can also be viewed as a transition point between the romantic and post-romantic periods generally. New Zealand literary critique is therefore intimately tied to the developing romantic vision that viewed imagination as the apex of human achievement in the arts. It is a highly creative literary mode that uses literature (and poetry in particular) as a point of finite self-reference for an examination of culture. Its appearance in New Zealand during World War Two was related to a shifting cultural pattern that had become more self-critical, at the same time that New Zealand literature was being established. Literary critique appeared as a means by which the broad cultural strains of New Zealand could be examined without large-scale publishing support, and with the aid of poetry and literature as evidential tools.

The mode has several identifiable features; the largest number of which are to be found in the critiques of James K. Baxter. The most significant of these features is the examination of New Zealand literature from a cultural perspective, calling for the "terrible learning" of critique. The mode implies that literature is the highest form of knowledge, exalts tradition over genius, has a strong educative focus, is self-reflexive, engages with issues of morality, and attempts to raise criticism to the status of art. Perhaps most obvious, however, is the mode's strongly anti-Cartesian perspective that

lauds the creative imagination as an essential component in any developed or developing cultural environment. This aspect of the mode has far reaching implications in both cultural and philosophical senses, because it is intimately bound up with the romantic philosophies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, much of the history of the mode (both locally and globally) is related to various attempts to move beyond the romanticism of the nineteenth century, towards more modern modes of imaginative consciousness. As has been argued in chapter one, such an attempt has proved to be futile, and related less to attempts to discard romantic philosophy, than to establish a new hegemony of cultural theory. It is extremely questionable whether the romantic basis of New Zealand literary critique can be overturned (or indeed, whether this is desirable), simply due to the continuing demands on the part of writers, academics and artists that they hold the key to cultural advance. It was the same cry of Wordsworth, Coleridge and (later) Matthew Arnold. Here we have "The Triumph of Romanticism": the triumph of imaginative vision.

ii] 'Salient Features: Juxtaposing the Local and the Global'

The central identifying feature of New Zealand literary critique is the positioning of the poet as social critic. Allen Curnow, James K. Baxter, Kendrick Smithyman, C. K. Stead and Keri Hulme all adopted this role, implicitly subscribing to the romantic position that viewed poets as the "new Jeremiahs". Other practitioners of the mode also appear to have subscribed to this basic understanding of the role of poetry and literature, indeed literary critique relies upon this belief for its motive force. Literature is situated "as a *cultural* phenomenon which calls for the terrible learning of critique".[1] Clearly this stemmed from the importation of romantic and post-romantic ideas from England, ranged especially around the thought of figures like Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling. In several of the New Zealand poet-critics mentioned above, the writing can be viewed quite simply as an attempt to explain their poetry to a wider audience, legitimating their own techniques and criticising others. Other writers like M. H. Holcroft, Robert Chapman, Bill Pearson, Wystan Curnow and Roger Horrocks, who did not identify as practising poets, tended to adopt a slightly different perspective. They still positioned literature as a central

[1]Davis and Schleifer, Criticism and Culture, p.3 (Davis and Schleifer's emphasis).

evidential element in their writing but took a more cultural approach, critiquing New Zealand culture more than its literature. The table below indicates the different positions adopted. While all authors took New Zealand literature as their point of finite self-reference (and there is often considerable overlap between the literary and cultural aspects), the different approaches are quite revealing:

"New Zealand Literature"

Literary	Cultural
E. H. McCormick **Allen Curnow** **James K. Baxter** **Kendrick Smithyman** **C. K. Stead** **Keri Hulme**	**M. H. Holcroft** **Robert Chapman** **Bill Pearson** **Wystan Curnow** **Roger Horrocks**

Figure 5

"Authorial Perspectives"

It should be clear at this point that although all the writers attended to New Zealand literature in its various literary and cultural guises, some were drawn to the literary side of the equation, some to the cultural. A central unifying feature of the mode is the desire on the part of the writer to connect the poet/writer, reader, and critic in one piece of prose. Indeed, this is a central function of the mode internationally – it acts as a "clearing house for ideas"[2] that aims at "a clarification of purpose within the arts"[3] by attending to each facet of production and consumption within that mechanism. It should be noted that several other essays within New Zealand's literary-critical tradition could be included, were it not for the fact that the essays examined in this thesis are "load bearing beams" within the canon of New Zealand literature. They are all important pieces of writing that made a significant impact upon publication. The writers who successfully engaged in New Zealand literary critique can be legitimately viewed as essayists of the highest quality available in this country. Although the sheer authorial power and range of insight is limited in

[2]Holcroft, Creative Problems in New Zealand, p.17.
[3]ibid.

comparison to figures like Arnold, Eliot, Leavis, and Trilling, it must be recognised that the mode is primarily of *local* rather than global significance. It has served a vital function in the development of both New Zealand literature and its associated cultural theory.

A more purely literary aspect of New Zealand literary critique is its development of an ongoing "conversation"[4] within New Zealand literary-critical circles. Each of the essays referred to in this thesis has tended to refer to the others, in an attempt not only to continue the conversation, but to argue for or against particular ideas and positions. In particular, literary critique has been a mode in which the various authors have attempted to introduce (or refute) certain national and international academic and literary discourses. While E. H. McCormick, M. H. Holcroft, Robert Chapman, and Bill Pearson appeared to argue for an "organic" conception of New Zealand literature and culture, for instance, Allen Curnow insistently placed "reality" at the centre of his critique, James K. Baxter symbolism, Kendrick Smithyman language, Wystan Curnow academia, C. K. Stead poetry, Keri Hulme biculturalism and Roger Horrocks "art" in a broad sense. In this sense, New Zealand literary critique is a highly personal mode of writing. As the examination of international critics in chapter one suggested, the mode relies on force of personality to a high degree. In several instances (such as James K. Baxter, Kendrick Smithyman, C. K. Stead and Keri Hulme) the New Zealand essays were motivated by a degree of discomfort at perceived biases in the conversation of New Zealand literature. In this sense the mode represents a forum for literary-critical and cultural debate. During the years of development during World War Two the main concerns were related to the quality of the New Zealand literary canon, but as the mode developed the conversation deepened in both scope and complexity. Chapman and Pearson attacked New Zealand's cultural biases, Baxter objected to the lack of concern over symbolic aspects of poetry, Smithyman to a lack of objectivity in criticism, Stead to the predominance of Georgianism, and Hulme to a lack of racial balance. The personal and inter-referential nature of the mode simply reflects the small literary and cultural scene in New Zealand.

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[4]Denis Walker, 'The Ethics of Place: Criticism, the Canon, and the Literary Conversation of New Zealand', Landfall 181 (March 1992), pp.65-73.

It is important to note, however, that in each case the end-product is essentially a "self-critique",[5] a re-situation of the self in relation to the object of inquiry. As should be expected from any mode of essay writing, the authors seem to have found in the course of writing that their understanding of both themselves *and* New Zealand's literary and cultural heritage had been deepened. The imaginative scope of the mode allows (indeed, prompts) this. It hints at the power to redefine reality through literature that romanticists were so at pains to laud. It cannot be stated directly enough that the mode is essayistic at its core. That a writer as concerned with "objectivity" as Smithyman found it necessary to cite Curnow on this point[6] indicates a fundamental inability (or unwillingness) on the part of the authors of literary critique to divorce themselves from their imagination. This is, of course, a central feature of the essay genre itself, and points directly back to the origin of the New Zealand tradition in the writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Essays are essentially creative and literary, with the individual author's imagination providing the impetus towards (in this case) literary and cultural redefinition. As Claire Obaldia has noted, "[o]nly by projecting his imagination can the essayist breathe (new) life into and release the essence of his object in a way that yields a more intense sense of truth than would a simple description".[7] It is in this way that New Zealand literary critique takes criticism and raises it to the status of art, providing a personal gloss that creates a piece of literature "*in and for itself*".[8]

iii] 'A Site-Specific Mode: Dominant Themes'

Although New Zealand literary critique is clearly implicated in the international development of the romantic literary-critical essay, the mode also highlights certain themes that point to specific problems faced by cultural theorists in New Zealand. Many of the themes that have preoccupied authors of literary critique in New Zealand have also proved beguiling to overseas writers, but viewed within the context of New Zealand literary critique as a unified mode they take on a certain localised quality.

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[5]Good, The Observing Self, p.11.
[6]See: p.188.
[7]Obaldia, The Essayistic Spirit, p.10.
[8]Hayden White, Metahistory, p.97 (White's emphasis).

Isolation was the dominant theme throughout the early history of New Zealand literary critique. The earlier proponents of the mode found this aspect of life in New Zealand to be especially troublesome. E. H. McCormick referred to a nation "Between Two Hemispheres"[9] and associated it with the parallel theme of "spiritual"[10] exile, or exile from experience.[11] For McCormick, New Zealand's geographically isolated position (especially from Britain) and lack of population entailed a kind of modernist ennui that dislocated its inhabitants from true experience and provoked almost pitiful attempts to create a solid and energetic nation through sheer physical toil. M. H. Holcroft similarly suggested that New Zealand was nothing more than an organic outgrowth of Britain (this seemed to assuage their anxiety over its isolation), but was optimistic that New Zealand's isolation might allow "the agony of the old world [to] be the condition of a future expansion in the Pacific".[12] Isolation was thus a double-edged sword during the early years of literary critique in New Zealand. While lamenting the dislocation from traditional forms of cultural experience, the authors appeared willing to believe that New Zealand's future was bright. Their optimism, of course, was located mainly around the possibility of a local literature, which presented to them the possibility that their nation could develop cultural forms that rivalled the older countries of Europe and America. Although at times strangely dependent upon the nature philosophies of Central Europe, Holcroft remained open to the possibility that New Zealand's isolation might prompt the growth of a national "soul" that could mould New Zealanders into a unified group "and strengthen it against the struggles and calamities which no age can hope to escape".[13] Allen Curnow was also captured by the concept of isolation, and like McCormick, associated it with a certain dislocation from experience peculiar to New Zealand. Later writers like Chapman and Pearson were to extrapolate this into what they perceived to be psychological traits of New Zealanders, but Curnow was more concerned with searching for reality in the face of isolation, rather than defining it. Poetry was the means by which this could be achieved, because it allowed a deep interaction between the poet and his nation and could prompt a resolution of problems

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[9]McCormick, Letters and Art in New Zealand, pp.126-168.
[10]ibid, p.161.
[11]In most writers "exile" was interdependent with "alienation".
[12]Holcroft, The Deepening Stream, p.33.
[13]ibid, p.17.

that had developed after the initial settlement of 1840.[14] A Book of New Zealand Verse was Curnow's attempt to begin the process of building a poetic canon that could lead New Zealanders away from their malaise of isolation. His central thesis was that "[w]e are stunted emotionally because we have not dealt direct with life, but through intermediaries . . .".[15] In true romantic fashion (and, again, like McCormick and Holcroft), Curnow felt that poets could strip away veils of illusion bought on by isolation and redirect New Zealanders gaze back to the fundamentals of experience.

McCormick, Holcroft and Curnow can quite correctly be viewed as the central triumvirate in the development of both a New Zealand literary-critical tradition and a cultural aesthetic, but opinion splintered quickly in the post-war years as new writers came to both extend and challenge their ideas. The period from 1945 to 1970 was dominated by the theme of provincialism (a theme that has had a consistent voice throughout the history of New Zealand literature). Robert Chapman and Bill Pearson had moved beyond the theme of isolation and were beginning to view New Zealand in a purely local sense. They were dismayed at the narrow parochialism displayed by their contemporaries, with their culture of "rugby, racing and beer", and their general antipathy towards artistic products of any kind. Both writers located the general attitude in what they termed New Zealand puritanism (the term was actually coined by Frank Sargeson). The argument went that the circumstances of New Zealand's settlement following 1840 entailed a population of narrow minded and emotionally stunted people, with little or no interest in the world of art and ideas. Chapman argued that the moral scheme the Victorian Evangelicals had transported to New Zealand had become hypertrophied and unresponsive to New Zealand's changing social pattern, establishing only narrow cultural norms and an unrealistic work ethic that did not heed the requirements of a modern family (or, indeed, social) unit.[16] Bill Pearson could be even more acerbic in his cultural commentary, noting that Pakeha treatment of Maori often hid a "benign superciliousness"[17] that was endemic to provincial New Zealand culture. Chapman and Pearson were uncompromising as cultural commentators, railing against what they perceived to be a complacent and myopic

[14]Curnow, A Book of New Zealand Verse, p.22.
[15]ibid, p.33.
[16]Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern', pp.48-50.
[17]Pearson, 'The Maori and Literature', p.218.

middle-class. Their essays stand as a testament to the anger felt on the part of many practising artists at the time that in retrospect can appear unnecessarily harsh. James K. Baxter was slightly more positive in his appraisal of New Zealand's provincial cultural pattern, because (despite being dismayed by his nation's repressive tendencies) he saw in the youth of New Zealand the possibility of future advances. His role as poet-critic led him to extol the virtues of youth, and prompt his readers to embark on rebellious adventures. Baxter was especially concerned to nurture the youth of New Zealand, because he believed that their freedom from traditional forms of moral constraint could lead New Zealanders away from their Victorian past. Symbolised in adolescents, freedom was a central element in Baxter's critique, understood "not [as] an ideal to be attained but already man's condition . . .".[18] Wystan Curnow's essay 'High Culture in a Small Province' represents the most optimistic of all the "provincial" essays contained in New Zealand literary critique as a mode, however. Provincialism for Curnow was not something to be transcended, but coped with, and he gave certain hints as to how this might be achieved. The university and associated cultural environment were the key to coping with New Zealand's isolation and provincial status for Curnow, provided that university teachers and other "middle-men of culture"[19] refused to be pulled down by the culture of amateurism he felt to be so pervasive in New Zealand. 'High Culture in a Small Province' suggested that New Zealand could engage with the wider world despite remaining a province of it. A key to Curnow's critique was the promotion of "psychic insulation"[20] for the talent present in New Zealand, so that New Zealand's (apparently) repressive culture did not make their alienation insuperable.

Provincialism waned in examples of literary critique after Wystan Curnow's offering (perhaps because he had highlighted ways in which it could be dealt with), but one theme that preoccupied the authors never disappeared – romanticism. Almost every author of New Zealand literary critique mentioned romanticism somewhere in their writing, and it always appeared as a corollary to the two themes outlined above: isolation and provincialism. The argument advanced was that New Zealand's isolation

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[18]Baxter, 'The Fire and the Anvil', p.47.
[19]Curnow, 'High Culture in a Small Province', p.157.
[20]ibid, p.155.

from the main currents of European and American culture had led to a hypertrophied culture mired within the confines of the Victorian tradition, a provincial culture that had its basis in a receding past. Kendrick Smithyman noted that the romantic attitude was essentially anti-scientific, devoted to nature and dominated by a reliance on the picturesque and descriptive epithets. The New Zealand tradition symbolised most forcefully in the poets of Kowhai Gold attempted to unify the dissociated sensibility of modern man through recourse to banal metaphors and "inspiration, sponteneity, enthusiasm or even ebullience".[21] As noted above, almost every author of literary critique in New Zealand attempted to move away from this stance, but again and again new writers would assert that it had not yet been achieved. If Allen Curnow developed a sense of provincialism deferred, a culture in limbo, then the dominant anxiety across the entire history of New Zealand literary critique would have to be "post-romanticism deferred". Even as late as 1979 C. K. Stead asserted that New Zealand poetry was dominated by Georgian sentimentalism, and seemed incapable (he did note exceptions, such as the Freed poets) of moving beyond it. By the nineteen-seventies it had become apparent to many writers that even attempts to place New Zealand's romantic past firmly in the past had failed miserably. Instead of dispensing with God's own country and all its romantic accoutrements, New Zealand writers simply shifted their attention to the urban centres, where the "Man Alone" toiled against an indifferent culture and the difficulties of modern living. The central conceit of a soulless, passionless nation survived.[22] It must be remembered that this preoccupation with New Zealand's legacy of romanticism (it should be stated forcefully that literary critique is one of its most lasting legacies) was intimately tied to the themes of isolation and provincialism. Isolation caused New Zealand to be cut off from developing trends in the modernist period, and provincialism was the vehicle by which the romantic basis of settlement was carried into the future.

Literary critique stands as evidence of this continuing (and perplexing, apparently) condition. Only Wystan Curnow (through his use of Morse Peckham) was able to gain a balanced appraisal of the problem, noting that the New Zealand backlash against romanticism was based upon a serious misconception as to just what the term referred

[21]Smithyman, 'The Road to Academe', p.35.
[22]Stead, 'From Wystan to Carlos', p.145.

to. It is a concept that (like modernism) can explain a variety of issues and has yet to be fully over-turned.[23] The fact that New Zealand literary critique continues to be practised (despite developing out of the thought of Wordsworth and Coleridge), is simply further evidence of the "ambiguity of Romantic figuration"[24] that has eluded most New Zealand cultural theorists. Poets, writers and artists remain central to any articulations of cultural identity, and they will naturally continue to arrogate to themselves the right not only to be at the centre, but to have a voice. The romantic vision has yet to be overturned, and New Zealand literary critique stands as evidence of this:

> Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee
> and before thou comest forth out of the womb
> I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet
> unto the nations.
>
> Jeremiah 1:5.

[23]Peckham, 'The Current Crisis in the Arts: Pop, Op and Mini', pp.231-251.
[24]White, Romantic Returns, p.7.

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